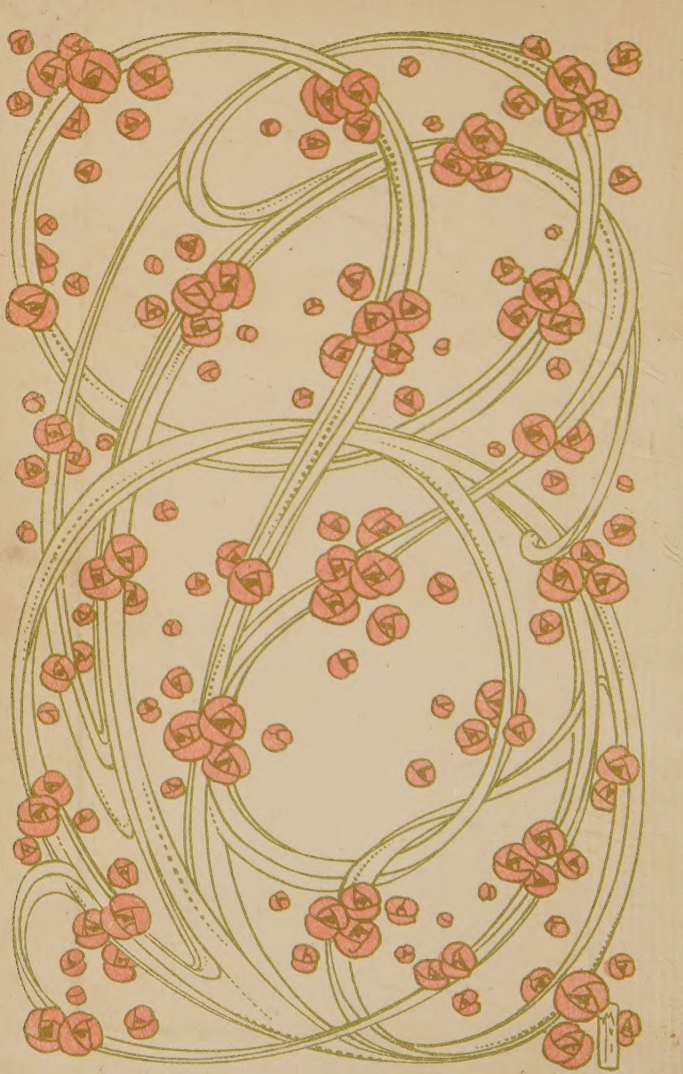


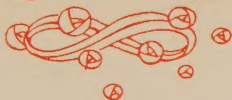
An ornate, horizontal Art Nouveau style frame made of thin, flowing gold lines. The frame is decorated with several circular medallions containing stylized floral or foliate motifs. Small gold dots are scattered throughout the design, particularly along the curves of the frame. The entire frame is set against a dark blue, textured background.

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI






The Red Letter Poets



POEMS BY
CHRISTINA ROSSETTI



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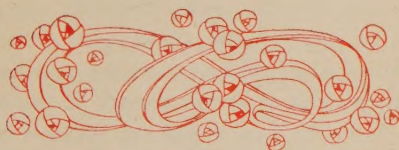
Christina Rossetti

From a crayon drawing by Dante Gabriel Rossetti

POEMS

By

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI



With an Introduction by

ALICE MEYNELL

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When Sir Aubrey de Vere celebrated the energy and splendour of Elizabeth as characters of "the sister of a god", he certainly did not intend to assign to her a merely derivative glory. Did he not imply that she was of the blood divine, no mere borrower, not one dependent for a name, no wearer of dignity by right of association, but a sister by nature and likeness? In this sense Christina Rossetti's highest honour is that she is the sister of a great and doubtless an immortal poet; because her genius—much thinner and more slender than his—is somewhat of his quality. She partakes by her own nature of his poetry, and would have been a poet even if Dante Gabriel Rossetti—being yet within himself what he was—had not written. Her poetry is, in a word, true poetry as gold leaf is gold; and sometimes her poems are as it were a mere film of poetry. This is true of the least admirable. In the best the unmistakable genius is not

only present but important, even great. The poet of "*The Convent Threshold*" and "*Up-Hill*", for example, possesses her art in bulk and in condensation. These are brief poems, not little ones. In all the ranks of English poets there is surely not one who should not be glad to own the authorship of these. In "*The Convent Threshold*" there is, I think, more passion than in any other poem written by a woman. In this respect Christina Rossetti surpasses Elizabeth Barrett Browning, abundant as was the earlier poet, and few and reluctant as are here the words of the later. Here is no loud tone, but the whisper is close and terrible:

*My words were slow, my tears were few;
But through the dark my silence spoke
Like thunder.*

In "*Up-Hill*" there is not this urgency, but there is an equal power. One wonders whether the writer used a conscious art; much of her work, indeed, would be greatly the better for the friction of what R. L. Stevenson called "*fundamental brain-work*". Ease is good, but—if the paradox may be

permitted—it must be ease at a certain cost. We are not surprised to hear that Christina Rossetti generally did not “work”. Her poems often lack friction and weight, in consequence—friction of water and the oar, of air and the pinion, when something is done. But now and again appears such a perfect piece of art as this poem, “Up-Hill”; we feel assured that no added “brain-work” could better it; but let us suppose that for once she did work, and so let criticism be justified. In “Goblin Market”, on the other hand, ease is almost too conspicuous. But the freedom, the sweetness, and the freshness of the diction give to this poem a charm out of all measure. The story has not the reasonableness that we have the right to expect even from a fairy tale—or especially from a fairy tale. It would be doing a wrong to the pleasant phantasy to take it as an allegory—it is a story, not an allegory, but, like all authentic and honest fairy-stories, it has a moral. The moral, however, is not intelligible; there is no perceptible reason why the goblin fruits should be deadly at one time and restorative

at another. The weakness of motive is partly carried by the poet's good faith, partly by the Preraphaelite grace—"quaintness" we would not call it, remembering how the word followed Rossetti to and fro, and how much it harassed his heart; but perhaps it may be applied with less danger of offence to the slighter verse of this humbler poet.

Christina Rossetti was the one woman of the young Preraphaelite company. When their little short-lived "Germ" was published, three notable poets were associated—Coventry Patmore, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and his sister. She was one of that band; but little indeed do we hear of her in the many histories and recollections of the time and the men. She must then have lived much aloof, but we know that her seclusion was not in the service of herself. She devoted her life to her mother, to her aunts, whom she tended in their old age, and to the services of the Church. She lived in London, and seems to have travelled little or not at all.

Of the greater number of saints and of the greater number of writers during at least seven of the Christian centuries it must be

said that their constant meditation was upon death. In nothing has the habit of the world achieved a greater change. But Christina Rossetti conformed to the ancient discipline. Her portrait should have been painted with the skull on the table. This preoccupation of hers renders the task of selection from her poems somewhat difficult; so great might be the monotony. But in all her poems of death there is the sense of life. This is so in the almost delirious power of "The Convent Threshold", as in the gentler, affectionate meditations.

ALICE MEYNELL

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Goblin Market



Morning and evening
Maids heard the goblins cry :
“ Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy :
Apples and quinces,
Lemons and oranges,
Plump unpecked cherries,
Melons and raspberries,
Bloom-down-cheeked peaches,
Swart-headed mulberries,
Wild free-born cranberries,
Crab-apples, dewberries,
Pine-apples, blackberries,
Apricots, strawberries ;—
All ripe together
In summer weather,—
Morns that pass by,
Fair eves that fly ;
Come buy, come buy :
Our grapes fresh from the vine,
Pomegranates full and fine,
Dates and sharp bullaces,

GOBLIN MARKET

Rare pears and greengages,
Damsons and bilberries,
Taste them and try:
Currants and gooseberries,
Bright fire-like barberries,
Figs to fill your mouth,
Citrons from the South,
Sweet to tongue and sound to eye;
Come buy, come buy."

Evening by evening
Among the brookside rushes,
Laura bowed her head to hear,
Lizzie veiled her blushes:
Crouching close together
In the cooling weather,
With clasping arms and cautioning lips
With tingling cheeks and finger tips.
"Lie close," Laura said,
Pricking up her golden head:
"We must not look at goblin men,
We must not buy their fruits:
Who knows upon what soil they fed
Their hungry, thirsty roots?"
"Come buy," call the goblins
Hobbling down the glen.
"Oh," cried Lizzie, "Laura, Laura,
You should not peep at goblin men."
Lizzie covered up her eyes,
Covered close lest they should look;

GOBLIN MARKET

Laura reared her glossy head,
And whispered like the restless brook:
"Look, Lizzie, look, Lizzie,
Down the glen tramp little men.
One hauls a basket,
One bears a plate,
One lugs a golden dish
Of many pounds' weight.
How fair the vine must grow
Whose grapes are so luscious;
How warm the wind must blow
Through those fruit bushes."
"No," said Lizzie: "No, no, no;
Their offers should not charm us,
Their evil gifts would harm us."
She thrust a dimpled finger
In each ear, shut eyes and ran:
Curious Laura chose to linger
Wondering at each merchant man.
One had a cat's face,
One whisked a tail,
One tramped at a rat's pace,
One crawled like a snail,
One like a wombat prowled obtuse and
furry,
One like a ratel tumbled hurry skurry.
She heard a voice like voice of doves
Cooing all together:
They sounded kind and full of loves
In the pleasant weather.

Laura stretched her gleaming neck
Like a rush-imbedded swan,
Like a lily from the beck,
Like a moonlit poplar branch,
Like a vessel at the launch
When its last restraint is gone.

Backwards up the mossy glen
Turned and trooped the goblin men,
With their shrill repeated cry,
"Come buy, come buy."
When they reached where Laura was,
They stood stock-still upon the moss,
Leering at each other,
Brother with queer brother;
Signalling each other,
Brother with sly brother.
One set his basket down,
One reared his plate;
One began to weave a crown
Of tendrils, leaves, and rough nuts brown
(Men sell not such in any town);
One heaved the golden weight
Of dish and fruit to offer her:
"Come buy, come buy," was still their
cry.
Laura stared but did not stir,
Longed, but had no money:
The whisk-tailed merchant bade her taste
In tones as smooth as honey,

GOBLIN MARKET

The cat-faced purr'd,
The rat-paced spoke a word
Of welcome, and the snail-paced even was
 heard;
One parrot-voiced and jolly
Cried "Pretty Goblin" still for "Pretty
 Polly";
One whistled like a bird.

But sweet-tooth Laura spoke in haste:
"Good Folk, I have no coin;
To take were to purloin :
I have no copper in my purse,
I have no silver either,
And all my gold is on the furze
That shakes in windy weather
Above the rusty heather."
"You have much gold upon your head,"
They answered all together:
"Buy from us with a golden curl."
She clipped a precious golden lock,
She dropped a tear more rare than pearl,
Then sucked their fruit globes fair or red:
Sweeter than honey from the rock,
Stronger than man-rejoicing wine,
Clearer than water flowed that juice;
She never tasted such before,
How should it cloy with length of use?
She sucked and sucked and sucked the
 more

GOBLIN MARKET

Fruits which that unknown orchard bore;
She sucked until her lips were sore;
Then flung the emptied rinds away
But gathered up one kernel-stone,
And knew not was it night or day
As she turned home alone.

Lizzie met her at the gate
Full of wise upbraidings:
"Dear, you should not stay so late,
Twilight is not good for maidens;
Should not loiter in the glen
In the haunts of goblin men.
Do you not remember Jeanie,
How she met them in the moonlight,
Took their gifts both choice and many,
Ate their fruits and wore their flowers
Plucked from bowers
Where summer ripens at all hours?
But ever in the noonlight
She pined and pined away;
Sought them by night and day,
Found them no more, but dwindled and
grew gray;
Then fell with the first snow,
While to this day no grass will grow
Where she lies low:
I planted daisies there a year ago
That never blow.
You should not loiter so."

GOBLIN MARKET

“Nay, hush,” said Laura:
“Nay, hush, my sister:
I ate and ate my fill,
Yet my mouth waters still:
To-morrow night I will
Buy more;” and kissed her:
“Have done with sorrow;
I’ll bring you plums to-morrow
Fresh on their mother twigs,
Cherries worth getting;
You cannot think what figs
My teeth have met in,
What melons icy-cold
Piled on a dish of gold
Too huge for me to hold,
What peaches with a velvet nap,
Pellucid grapes without one seed:
Odorous indeed must be the mead
Whereon they grow, and pure the wave
they drink
With lilies at the brink,
And sugar-sweet their sap.”

Golden head by golden head,
Like two pigeons in one nest
Folded in each other’s wings,
They lay down in their curtained bed:
Like two blossoms on one stem,
Like two flakes of new-fall’n snow,
Like two wands of ivory

GOBLIN MARKET

Tipped with gold for awful kings.
Moon and stars gazed in at them,
Wind sang to them lullaby,
Lumbering owls forbore to fly,
Not a bat flapped to and fro
Round their nest:
Cheek to cheek and breast to breast
Locked together in one nest.

Early in the morning
When the first cock crowed his warning,
Neat like bees, as sweet and busy,
Laura rose with Lizzie:
Fetched in honey, milked the cows,
Aired and set to rights the house,
Kneaded cakes of whitest wheat,
Cakes for dainty mouths to eat,
Next churned butter, whipped up cream,
Fed their poultry, sat and sewed;
Talked as modest maidens should:
Lizzie with an open heart,
Laura in an absent dream,
One content, one sick in part;
One warbling for the mere bright day's
delight,
One longing for the night.

At length slow evening came:
They went with pitchers to the reedy
brook;

GOBLIN MARKET

Lizzie most placid in her look,
Laura most like a leaping flame.
They drew the gurgling water from its
deep.

Lizzie plucked purple and rich golden flags,
Then turning homeward said: "The sun-
set flushes

Those furthest loftiest crags;
Come, Laura, not another maiden lags.
No wilful squirrel wags,
The beasts and birds are fast asleep."
But Laura loitered still among the rushes,
And said the bank was steep.

And said the hour was early still,
The dew not fall'n, the wind not chill;
Listening ever, but not catching
The customary cry,
"Come buy, come buy,"
With its iterated jingle
Of sugar-baited words:
Not for all her watching
Once discerning even one goblin
Racing, whisking, tumbling, hobbling;
Let alone the herds
That used to tramp along the glen,
In groups or single,
Of brisk fruit-merchant men.

Till Lizzie urged, "O Laura, come;

GOBLIN MARKET

I hear the fruit-call, but I dare not look:
You should not loiter longer at this brook:
Come with me home.

The stars rise, the moon bends her arc,
Each glow-worm winks her spark,
Let us get home before the night grows
dark:

For clouds may gather
Though this is summer weather,
Put out the lights and drench us through;
Then if we lost our way what should we
do?"

Laura turned cold as stone
To find her sister heard that cry alone,
That goblin cry,
"Come buy our fruits, come buy."
Must she then buy no more such dainty
fruits?
Must she no more such succous pasture
find,
Gone deaf and blind?
Her tree of life drooped from the root:
She said not one word in her heart's sore
ache:
But peering thro' the dimness, nought dis-
cerning,
Trudged home, her pitcher dripping all the
way;
So crept to bed, and lay

GOBLIN MARKET

Silent till Lizzie slept;
Then sat up in a passionate yearning,
And gnashed her teeth for baulked desire,
 and wept
As if her heart would break.

Day after day, night after night,
Laura kept watch in vain
In sullen silence of exceeding pain.
She never caught again the goblin cry,
“Come buy, come buy;”—
She never spied the goblin men
Hawking their fruits along the glen:
But when the noon waxed bright
Her hair grew thin and gray;
She dwindled, as the fair full moon doth
 turn
To swift decay and burn
Her fire away.

One day remembering her kernel-stone
She set it by a wall that faced the south;
Dewed it with tears, hoped for a root,
Watched for a waxing shoot,
But there came none.
It never saw the sun,
It never felt the trickling moisture run:
While with sunk eyes and faded mouth
She dreamed of melons, as a traveller sees
False waves in desert drouth

GOBLIN MARKET

With shade of leaf-crowned trees,
And burns the thirstier in the sandful
breeze.

She no more swept the house,
Tended the fowls or cows,
Fetched honey, kneaded cakes of wheat,
Brought water from the brook:
But sat down listless in the chimney-nook
And would not eat.

Tender Lizzie could not bear
To watch her sister's cankerous care,
Yet not to share.
She night and morning
Caught the goblins' cry:
"Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy:"—
Beside the brook, along the glen,
She heard the tramp of goblin men.
The voice and stir
Poor Laura could not hear;
Longed to buy fruit to comfort her,
But feared to pay too dear.
She thought of Jeanie in her grave,
Who should have been a bride;
But who for joys brides hope to have
Fell sick and died
In her gay prime,
In earliest Winter time,

GOBLIN MARKET

With the first glazing rime,
With the first snow-fall of crisp Winter
time.

Till Laura dwindling
Seemed knocking at Death's door:
Then Lizzie weighed no more
Better and worse;
But put a silver penny in her purse,
Kissed Laura, crossed the heath with
clumps of furze
At twilight, halted by the brook:
And for the first time in her life
Began to listen and look.

Laughed every goblin
When they spied her peeping:
Came towards her hobbling,
Flying, running, leaping,
Puffing and blowing,
Chuckling, clapping, crowing,
Clucking and gobbling,
Mopping and mowing,
Full of airs and graces,
Pulling wry faces,
Demure grimaces,
Cat-like and rat-like,
Ratel- and wombat-like,
Snail-paced in a hurry,
Parrot-voiced and whistler,

GOBLIN MARKET

Helter skelter, hurry skurry,
Chattering like magpies,
Fluttering like pigeons,
Gliding like fishes,—
Hugged her and kissed her,
Squeezed and caressed her:
Stretched up their dishes,
Panniers, and plates:
“Look at our apples
Russet and dun,
Bob at our cherries,
Bite at our peaches,
Citrons and dates,
Grapes for the asking,
Pears red with basking
Out in the sun,
Plums on their twigs;
Pluck them and suck them,
Pomegranates, figs.”—

“Good folk,” said Lizzie,
Mindful of Jeanie:
“Give me much and many:”
Held out her apron,
Tossed them her penny.
“Nay, take a seat with us,
Honour and eat with us,”
They answered grinning:
“Our feast is but beginning.
Night yet is early,

GOBLIN MARKET

Warm and dew-pearly,
Wakeful and starry:
Such fruits as these
No man can carry;
Half their bloom would fly,
Half their dew would dry,
Half their flavour would pass by.
Sit down and feast with us,
Be welcome guest with us,
Cheer you and rest with us.”—
“Thank you,” said Lizzie: “But one
waits

At home alone for me:
So without further parleying,
If you will not sell me any
Of your fruits though much and many
Give me back my silver penny
I tossed you for a fee.”—
They began to scratch their pates,
No longer wagging, purring,
But visibly demurring,
Grunting and snarling.
One called her proud,
Cross-grained, uncivil;
Their tones waxed loud,
Their looks were evil.
Lashing their tails
They trod and hustled her,
Elbowed and jostled her,
Clawed with their nails,

GOBLIN MARKET

Barking, mewing, hissing, mocking,
Tore her gown and soiled her stocking,
Twitched her hair out by the roots,
Stamped upon her tender feet,
Held her hands and squeezed their fruits
Against her mouth to make her eat.

White and golden Lizzie stood,
Like a lily in a flood,—
Like a rock of blue-veined stone
Lashed by tides obstreperously,—
Like a beacon left alone
In a hoary roaring sea,
Sending up a golden fire,—
Like a fruit-crowned orange-tree
White with blossoms honey-sweet
Sore beset by wasp and bee,—
Like a royal virgin town
Topped with gilded dome and spire
Close beleaguered by a fleet
Mad to tug her standard down.

One may lead a horse to water,
Twenty cannot make him drink.
Though the goblins cuffed and caught
her,
Coaxed and fought her,
Bullied and besought her,
Scratched her, pinched her black as ink,
Kicked and knocked her,

GOBLIN MARKET

Mauled and mocked her,
Lizzie uttered not a word;
Would not open lip from lip
Lest they should cram a mouthful in:
But laughed in heart to feel the drip
Of juice that syruiped all her face,
And lodged in dimples of her chin,
And streaked her neck which quaked like
curd.

At last the evil people,
Worn out by her resistance,
Flung back her penny, kicked their fruit
Along whichever road they took,
Not leaving root or stone or shoot;
Some writhed into the ground,
Some dived into the brook
With ring and ripple,
Some scudded on the gale without a sound,
Some vanished in the distance.

In a smart, ache, tingle,
Lizzie went her way;
Knew not was it night or day;
Sprang up the bank, tore thro' the furze,
Threaded copse and dingle,
And heard her penny jingle
Bouncing in her purse,—
Its bounce was music to her ear.
She ran and ran
As if she feared some goblin man

GOBLIN MARKET

Dogged her with gibe or curse
Or something worse:
But not one goblin skurried after,
Nor was she pricked by fear;
The kind heart made her windy-paced
That urged her home quite out of breath
with haste
And inward laughter.

She cried, "Laura," up the garden,
"Did you miss me?
Come and kiss me.
Never mind my bruises,
Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices
Squeezed from goblin fruits for you,
Goblin pulp and goblin dew.
Eat me, drink me, love me;
Laura, make much of me:
For your sake I have braved the glen
And had to do with goblin merchant men."

Laura started from her chair,
Flung her arms up in the air,
Clutched her hair:
"Lizzie, Lizzie, have you tasted
For my sake the fruit forbidden?
Must your light like mine be hidden,
Your young life like mine be wasted,
Undone in mine undoing,
And ruined in my ruin,

GOBLIN MARKET

Thirsty, cankered, goblin-ridden?"—
She clung about her sister,
Kissed and kissed and kissed her:
Tears once again
Refreshed her shrunken eyes,
Dropping like rain
After long sultry drouth;
Shaking with aguish fear, and pain,
She kissed and kissed her with a hungry
mouth.

Her lips began to scorch,
That juice was wormwood to her tongue,
She loathed the feast:
Writhing as one possessed she leaped and
sung,
Rent all her robe, and wrung
Her hands in lamentable haste,
And beat her breast.
Her locks streamed like the torch
Borne by a racer at full speed,
Or like the mane of horses in their flight,
Or like an eagle when she stems the light
Straight toward the sun,
Or like a caged thing freed,
Or like a flying flag when armies run.

Swift fire spread through her veins,
knocked at her heart,
Met the fire smouldering there

GOBLIN MARKET

And overbore its lesser flame;
She gorged on bitterness without a name:
Ah! fool, to choose such part
Of soul-consuming care!
Sense failed in the mortal strife:
Like the watch-tower of a town
Which an earthquake shatters down,
Like a lightning-stricken mast,
Like a wind-uprooted tree
Spun about,
Like a foam-topped waterspout
Cast down headlong in the sea,
She fell at last;
Pleasure past and anguish past,
Is it death or is it life?

Life out of death.
That night long Lizzie watched by her,
Counted her pulse's flagging stir,
Felt for her breath,
Held water to her lips, and cooled her face
With tears and fanning leaves:
But when the first birds chirped about their
eaves,
And early reapers plodded to the place
Of golden sheaves,
And dew-wet grass
Bowed in the morning winds so brisk to
pass,
And new buds with new day

GOBLIN MARKET

Opened of cup-like lilies on the stream,
Laura awoke as from a dream,
Laughed in the innocent old way,
Hugged Lizzie but not twice or thrice;
Her gleaming locks showed not one thread
 of gray,
Her breath was sweet as May,
And light danced in her eyes.

Days, weeks, months, years,
Afterwards, when both were wives
With children of their own;
Their mother-hearts beset with fears,
Their lives bound up in tender lives;
Laura would call the little ones
And tell them of her early prime,
Those pleasant days long gone
Of not-returning time:
Would talk about the haunted glen,
The wicked, quaint fruit-merchant men.
Their fruits like honey to the throat
But poison in the blood;
(Men sell not such in any town:)
Would tell them how her sister stood
In deadly peril to do her good,
And win the fiery antidote:
Then joining hands to little hands
Would bid them cling together,
“For there is no friend like a sister
In calm or stormy weather;

GOBLIN MARKET

To cheer one on the tedious way,
To fetch one if one goes astray,
To lift one if one totters down,
To strengthen whilst one stands."

Up-hill



Does the road wind up-hill all the way?

Yes, to the very end.

Will the day's journey take the whole long
day?

From morn to night, my friend.

But is there for the night a resting-place?

A roof for when the slow dark hours
begin.

May not the darkness hide it from my
face?

You cannot miss that inn.

Shall I meet other wayfarers at night?

Those who have gone before.

Then must I knock, or call when just in
sight?

They will not keep you standing at that
door.

UP-HILL

Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak?

Of labour you shall find the sum.

Will there be beds for me and all who
seek?

Yea, beds for all who come.

The Convent Threshold



There's blood between us, love, my love,
There's father's blood, there's brother's
blood;

And blood's a bar I cannot pass:
I choose the stairs that mount above,
Stair after golden skyward stair,
To city and to sea of glass.

My lily feet are soiled with mud,
With scarlet mud which tells a tale
Of hope that was, of guilt that was,
Of love that shall not yet avail;
Alas, my heart, if I could bare
My heart, this self-same stain is there:
I seek the sea of glass and fire
To wash the spot, to burn the snare;
Lo, stairs are meant to lift us higher:
Mount with me, mount the kindled stair.

Your eyes look earthward, mine look up.
I see the far-off city grand,
Beyond the hills a watered land,

THE CONVENT THRESHOLD

Beyond the gulf a gleaming strand
Of mansions where the righteous sup;
Who sleep at ease among their trees,
Or wake to sing a cadenced hymn
With Cherubim and Seraphim;
They bore the Cross, they drained the cup,
Racked, roasted, crushed, wrenched limb
from limb,
They the offscouring of the world:
The heaven of starry heavens unfurled,
The sun before their face is dim.

You looking earthward, what see you?
Milk-white, wine-flushed among the vines,
Up and down leaping, to and fro,
Most glad, most full, made strong with
wines,
Blooming as peaches pearled with dew,
Their golden windy hair afloat,
Love-music warbling in their throat,
Young men and women come and go.

You linger, yet the time is short:
Flee for your life, gird up your strength
To flee; the shadows stretched at length
Show that day wanes, that night draws
nigh;
Flee to the mountain, tarry not.
Is this a time for smile and sigh,
For songs among the secret trees

THE CONVENT THRESHOLD

Where sudden blue birds nest and sport?
The time is short and yet you stay:
To-day, while it is called to-day,
Kneel, wrestle, knock, do violence, pray;
To-day is short, to-morrow nigh:
Why will you die? why will you die?

You sinned with me a pleasant sin:
Repent with me, for I repent.
Woe's me the lore I must unlearn!
Woe's me that easy way we went,
So rugged when I would return!
How long until my sleep begin,
How long shall stretch these nights and
days?

Surely, clean Angels cry, she prays;
She laves her soul with tedious tears:
How long must stretch these years and
years?

I turn from you my cheeks and eyes,
My hair which you shall see no more—
Alas for joy that went before,
For joy that dies, for love that dies!
Only my lips still turn to you,
My livid lips that cry, Repent.
O weary life, O weary Lent,
O weary time whose stars are few.

How should I rest in Paradise,

THE CONVENT THRESHOLD

Or sit on steps of Heaven alone?
If Saints and Angels spoke of love,
Should I not answer from my throne:
Have pity upon me, ye my friends,
For I have heard the sound thereof:
Should I not turn with yearning eyes,
Turn earthwards with a pitiful pang?
Oh save me from a pang in Heaven.
By all the gifts we took and gave,
Repent, repent, and be forgiven:
This life is long, but yet it ends;
Repent and purge your soul and save:
No gladder song the morning stars
Upon their birthday morning sang
Than Angels sing when one repents.

I tell you what I dreamed last night;
A spirit with transfigured face
Fire-footed clomb an infinite space.
I heard his hundred pinions clang,
Heaven-bells rejoicing rang and rang,
Heaven-air was thrilled with subtle scents,
Worlds spun upon their rushing cars:
He mounted shrieking "Give me light";
Still light was pour'd on him, more light;
Angels, Archangels he outstripped,
Exultant in exceeding might,
And trod the skirts of Cherubim.
Still "Give me light", he shrieked; and
dipped

THE CONVENT THRESHOLD

His thirsty face, and drank a sea,
Athirst with thirst it could not slake.
I saw him, drunk with knowledge, take
From aching brows the aureole crown—
His locks writhed like a cloven snake—
He left his throne to grovel down
And lick the dust of Seraphs' feet:
For what is knowledge duly weighed?
Knowledge is strong, but love is sweet;
Yea all the progress he had made
Was but to learn that all is small
Save love, for love is all in all.

I tell you what I dreamed last night:
It was not dark, it was not light,
Cold dews had drenched my plenteous hair
Through clay; you came to seek me there.
And "Do you dream of me?" you said.
My heart was dust that used to leap
To you; I answered half asleep:
"My pillow is damp, my sheets are red,
There's a leaden tester to my bed:
Find you a warmer playfellow,
A warmer pillow for your head,
A kinder love to love than mine."
You wrung your hands: while I like lead,
Crushed downwards through the sodden
earth:
You smote your hands but not in mirth,
And reeled but were not drunk with wine.

THE CONVENT THRESHOLD

For all night long I dreamed of you:
I woke and prayed against my will,
Then slept to dream of you again.
At length I rose and knelt and prayed:
I cannot write the words I said,
My words were slow, my tears were few;
But through the dark my silence spoke
Like thunder. When this morning broke,
My face was pinched, my hair was gray,
And frozen blood was on the sill
Where stifling in my struggle I lay.

If now you saw me you would say:
Where is the face I used to love?
And I would answer: Gone before;
It tarries veiled in Paradise.
When once the morning star shall rise,
When earth with shadow flees away
And we stand safe within the door,
Then you shall lift the veil thereof.
Look up, rise up: for far above
Our palms are grown, our place is set;
There we shall meet as once we met,
And love with old familiar love.

Repining



She sat alway thro' the long day
Spinning the weary thread away;
And ever said in undertone:
"Come, that I be no more alone."

From early dawn to set of sun
Working, her task was still undone;
And the long thread seemed to increase
Even while she spun and did not cease.
She heard the gentle turtle-dove
Tell to its mate a tale of love;
She saw the glancing swallows fly,
Ever a social company;
She knew each bird upon its nest
Had cheering songs to bring it rest;
None lived alone save only she;—
The wheel went round more wearily;
She wept and said in undertone:
"Come, that I be no more alone."

Day followed day and still she sighed
For love, and was not satisfied;

REPINING

Until one night, when the moonlight
Turned all the trees to silver-white,
She heard, what ne'er she heard before,
A steady hand undo the door.
The nightingale since set of sun
Her throbbing music had not done,
And she had listened silently;
But now the wind had changed, and she
Heard the sweet song no more, but heard
Beside her bed a whispered word:
"Damsel, rise up; be not afraid;
For I am come at last," it said.

She trembled, tho' the voice was mild;
She trembled like a frightened child;—
Till she looked up, and then she saw
The unknown speaker without awe.
He seemed a fair young man, his eyes
Beaming with serious charities;
His cheek was white but hardly pale;
And a dim glory like a veil
Hovered about his head, and shone
Thro' the whole room till night was gone.

So her fear fled; and then she said,
Leaning upon her quiet bed:
"Now thou art come, I prithee stay,
That I may see thee in the day,
And learn to know thy voice, and hear
It evermore calling me near."

REPINING

He answered: "Rise and follow me."
But she looked upwards wonderingly:
"And whither wouldst thou go, friend?
 stay

Until the dawning of the day."
But he said: "The wind ceaseth, Maid;
Of chill nor damp be thou afraid."

She bound her hair up from the floor,
And passed in silence from the door.

So they went forth together, he
Helping her forward tenderly.
The hedges bowed beneath his hand;
Forth from the streams came the dry land
As they passed over; evermore
The pallid moonbeams shone before;
And the wind hushed, and nothing stirred;
Not even a solitary bird,
Scared by their footsteps, fluttered by
Where aspen-trees stood steadily.

As they went on, at length a sound
Came trembling on the air around;
The undistinguishable hum
Of life, voices that go and come
Of busy men, and the child's sweet
High laugh, and noise of trampling feet.

Then he said, "Wilt thou go and see?"
And she made answer joyfully;

REPINING

“The noise of life, of human life,
Of dear communion without strife,
Of converse held 'twixt friend and friend;
Is it not here our path shall end?”
He led her on a little way
Until they reached a hillock: “Stay.”

It was a village in a plain.
High mountains screened it from the rain
And stormy wind; and nigh at hand
A bubbling streamlet flowed, o'er sand
Pebbly and fine, and sent life up
Green succous stalk and flower-cup.

Gradually, day's harbinger,
A chilly wind began to stir.
It seemed a gentle powerless breeze
That scarcely rustled thro' the trees;
And yet it touched the mountain's head
And the paths man might never tread.
But hearken: in the quiet weather
Do all the streams flow down together?—

No, 't is a sound more terrible
Than tho' a thousand rivers fell.
The everlasting ice and snow
Were loosened then, but not to flow;—
With a loud crash like solid thunder
The avalanche came, burying under

REPINING

The village; turning life and breath
And rest and joy and plans to death.

“Oh! let us fly, for pity fly;
Let us go hence, friend, thou and I.
There must be many regions yet
Where these things make not desolate.”

He looked upon her seriously;
Then said: “Arise and follow me.”
The path that lay before them was
Nigh covered over with long grass;
And many slimy things and slow
Trailed on between the roots below.
The moon looked dimmer than before;
And shadowy cloudlets floating o’er
Its face sometimes quite hid its light,
And filled the skies with deeper night.

At last, as they went on, the noise
Was heard of the sea’s mighty voice;
And soon the ocean could be seen
In its long restlessness serene.
Upon its breast a vessel rode
That drowsily appeared to nod
As the great billows rose and fell,
And swelled to sink, and sank to swell.

Meanwhile the strong wind had come forth
From the chill regions of the North,

REPINING

The mighty wind invisible.
And the low waves began to swell;
And the sky darkened overhead;
And the moon once looked forth, then fled
Behind dark clouds; while here and there
The lightning shone out in the air;
And the approaching thunder rolled
With angry peelings manifold.
How many vows were made, and prayers
That in safe times were cold and scarce.
Still all availed not; and at length
The waves arose in all their strength,
And fought against the ship, and filled
The ship. Then were the clouds unsealed,
And the rain hurried forth, and beat
On every side and over it.

Some clung together, and some kept
A long stern silence, and some wept.
Many half crazed looked on in wonder
As the strong timbers rent asunder;
Friends forgot friends, foes fled to foes;—
And still the water rose and rose.

“Ah woe is me! Whom I have seen
Are now as though they had not been.
In the earth there is room for birth,
And there are graves enough in earth;
Why should the cold sea, tempest-torn,
Bury those whom it hath not borne?”

REPINING

He answered not, and they went on.
The glory of the heavens was gone;
The moon gleamed not nor any star;
Cold winds were rustling near and far,
And from the trees the dry leaves fell,
With a sad sound unspeakable.
The air was cold; till from the South
A gust blew hot, like sudden drouth,
Into their faces; and a light,
Glowing and red, shone thro' the night.

A mighty city full of flame
And death and sounds without a name.
Amid the black and blinding smoke,
The people, as one man, awoke.
Oh! happy they who yesterday
On the long journey went away;
Whose pallid lips, smiling and chill,
While the flames scorch them smile on still;
Who murmur not; who tremble not
When the bier crackles fiery hot;
Who dying said in love's increase:
"Lord, let thy servant part in peace."

Those in the town could see and hear
A shaded river flowing near;
The broad deep bed could hardly hold
Its plenteous waters calm and cold.
Was flame-wrapt all the city wall,
The city gates were flame-wrapt all.

REPINING

What was man's strength, what puissance
then?

Women were mighty as strong men.
Some knelt in prayer, believing still,
Resigned unto a righteous will,
Bowing beneath the chastening rod,
Lost to the world, but found of God.
Some prayed for friend, for child, for
wife;

Some prayed for faith; some prayed for
life;

While some, proud even in death, hope
gone,
Steadfast and still, stood looking on.

“Death—death—oh! let us fly from
death;

Where'er we go it followeth;
All these are dead; and we alone
Remain to weep for what is gone.
What is this thing? thus hurriedly
To pass into eternity;
To leave the earth so full of mirth;
To lose the profit of our birth;
To die and be no more; to cease,
Having numbness that is not peace.
Let us go hence; and, even if thus
Death everywhere must go with us,
Let us not see the change, but see
Those who have been or still shall be.”

REPINING

He sighed, and they went on together;
Beneath their feet did the grass wither;
Across the heaven high overhead
Dark misty clouds floated and fled;
And in their bosom was the thunder,
And angry lightnings flashed out under,
Forked and red and menacing;
Far off the wind was muttering;
It seemed to tell, not understood,
Strange secrets to the listening wood.

Upon its wings it bore the scent
Of blood of a great armament:
Then saw they how on either side
Fields were down-trodden far and wide.
That morning at the break of day
Two nations had gone forth to slay.

As a man soweth so he reaps.
The field was full of bleeding heaps;
Ghastly corpses of men and horses
That met death at a thousand sources;
Cold limbs and putrifying flesh;
Long love-locks clotted to a mesh
That stifled; stiffened mouths beneath
Staring eyes that had looked on death.

But these were dead: these felt no more
The anguish of the wounds they bore.

REPINING

Behold, they shall not sigh again,
Nor justly fear, nor hope in vain.
What if none wept above them?—is
The sleeper less at rest for this?
Is not the young child's slumber sweet
When no man watcheth over it?

These had deep calm; but all around
There was a deadly smothered sound,
The choking cry of agony
From wounded men who could not die;
Who watched the black wing of the raven
Rise like a cloud 'twixt them and heaven,
And in the distance flying fast
Beheld the eagle come at last.

She knelt down in her agony:
"O Lord, it is enough," said she:
"My heart's prayer putteth me to shame;
Let me return to whence I came.
Thou who for love's sake didst reprove,
Forgive me for the sake of love."

A Royal Princess



I, a Princess king-descended, stuck with
jewels, gilded, dressed,
Would rather be a peasant with her baby
at her breast,
For all I shine so like the sun, and am
purple like the west.

Two and two my guards behind, two and
two before,
Two and two on either hand, they guard
me evermore;
Me, poor dove that must not coo — eagle
that must not soar.

All my fountains cast up perfumes, all
my gardens grow
Scented woods and foreign spices, with
all flowers in blow
That are costly, out of season as the sea-
sons go.

A ROYAL PRINCESS

All my walls are lost in mirrors, where-
upon I trace
Self to right hand, self to left hand, self
in every place,
Self-same solitary figure, self-same seek-
ing face.

Then I have an ivory chair high to sit
upon,
Almost like my Father's chair which is
an ivory throne:
There I sit uplift and upright, there I sit
alone.

Alone by day, alone by night, alone days
without end;
My Father and my Mother give me trea-
sures, search and spend:—
O my Father, O my Mother, have you
ne'er a friend?

As I am a lofty princess, so my Father
is
A lofty king, accomplished in all kingly
subtilties,
Holding in his strong right hand world-
kingdoms' balances.

A ROYAL PRINCESS

He has quarrelled with his neighbours,
he has scourged his foes;
Vassal counts and princes follow where
his pennon goes,
Long-descended valiant lords whom the
vulture knows,

On whose track the vulture swoops, when
they ride in state
To break the strength of armies and
topple down the great:
Each of these my courteous servant, none
of these my mate.

My Father counting up his strength sets
down with equal pen
So many head of cattle, head of horses,
head of men:
These for slaughter, these for breeding,
with the how and when.

Some to work on roads, canals, some to
man his ships;
Some to smart in mines beneath sharp
overseers' whips;
Some to trap fur-beasts in lands where
utmost winter nips.

A ROYAL PRINCESS

Once it came into my heart, and whelmed
me like a flood,
That these too are men and women,
human flesh and blood;
Men with hearts and men with souls,
tho' trodden down like mud.

All that day I sat alone, would not eat
nor drink,
Sat humiliated down in dust to weep and
think:
My heart grew like a stone; I felt it
sink and sink and sink.

At night my Father held a banquet; I
must needs be there,
Statue-cold, severe, and stately, if not
statue-fair;
With hereditary jewels clustered in my
hair,

With a fan of rainbow feathers and a
golden chain;
Some bore gusty lights before me, some
bore up my train:
"These are men, are men, are men,"
throbbed my heart and brain.

A ROYAL PRINCESS

Our feasting was not glad that night,
our music was not gay;
On my Mother's graceful head I marked
a thread of gray,
My Father frowning at the fare seemed
every dish to weigh.

I sat beside them sole princess in my
exalted place,
My ladies and my gentlemen stood by me
on the dais:
A mirror showed me I look old and hag-
gard in the face;

It showed me that my ladies all are fair
to gaze upon,
Plump, plenteous-haired, to every one
love's secret lore is known,
They laugh by day, they sleep by night:
ah me, what is a throne?

The singing men and women sang that
night as usual,
The dancers danced in pairs and sets;
but music had a fall,
A melancholy windy fall as at a funeral.

A ROYAL PRINCESS

Amid the toss of torches to my chamber
back we swept;
My ladies loosed my golden chain; mean-
time I could have wept
To think of one that was not loosed
whether I waked or slept.

I took my bath of scented milk delicately
waited on,
They burned sweet things for my delight,
cedar and cinnamon,
They lit my shaded silver lamp and left
me there alone.

A day went by, a week went by; and
next I heard it said:
“Men are clamouring, women, children,
clamouring to be fed;
Men, like famished dogs, are howling in
the streets for bread.”

So two whispered by my door, not think-
ing I could hear,
Vulgar, naked truth, ungarnished for a
royal ear;
Fit for hustling in the background, not
to stalk so near.

A ROYAL PRINCESS

But I strained my utmost sense to catch
this truth and mark:—

“There are families out grazing like cattle
in the park.”—

“A pair of peasants must be saved, even
if we build an ark.”

A merry jest, a merry laugh; each strolled
upon his way:

One was my page, a pretty lad, in dress
perhaps too gay;

One was my youngest maid, as sweet
and white as cream in May.

Other footsteps followed softly with a
weightier tramp;

Voices said: “Picked soldiers have been
summoned from the camp,

To quell these base-born ruffians who
make free to howl and stamp.”

“Howl and stamp?” one answered:

“They made free to hurl a stone
At the minister’s state coach, well aimed
and stoutly thrown.”

“There’s work then for the soldiers, for
this rank crop must be mown.”

A ROYAL PRINCESS

“One I saw, a poor old fool with ashes
on his head,
Whimpering because a girl had snatched
his crust of bread:
Then he dropped; when some one raised
him, it turned out he was dead.”

“After us the deluge,” was retorted with
a laugh:
“If bread’s the staff of life they must
walk without a staff.”—
“While I’ve a loaf they’re welcome to
my blessing and the chaff.”—

These passed. The king: stand up. Said
my father with a smile:
“Daughter mine, your mother comes to
sit with you awhile,
She’s sad to-day; and who but you her
sadness can beguile?”

He too left me. Shall I touch my harp
now while I wait,—
I hear them doubling guard below before
our palace gate—
Or shall I work the last gold stitch into
my veil of state;

A ROYAL PRINCESS

Or shall my woman stand and read some
unimpassioned scene,
There's music of a lulling sort in words
that pause between;
Or shall she merely fan me while I wait
here for the queen?

Again I caught my father's voice in sharp
word of command:
"Charge"—a clash of steel:—"Charge
again, the rebels stand.
Smite and spare not, hand to hand; smite
and spare not, hand to hand."

There swelled a tumult at the gate, high
voices waxing higher;
A flash of red reflected light lit the cathe-
dral spire;
I heard a cry for faggots, then I heard
a yell for fire.

"Sit and roast there with your meat, sit
and bake there with your bread,
You who sat and saw us starve," one
shrieking woman said:
"Sit on your throne and roast with your
crown upon your head."

A ROYAL PRINCESS

O Queen my Mother, come in haste; yet
 is your haste too slack;
I have set my face towards where there
 is no looking back,
I have set my foot upon the unreturning
 track.

This thing will I do, whilst my mother
 tarrieth:
I will take my fine spun gold, but not to
 sew therewith;
I will take my gold and gems, and rain-
 bow fan and wreath;

With a ransom in my lap, a king's ran-
 som in my hand,
I will go down to the people, will stand
 face to face; will stand
Where they curse King, Queen, and
 Princess of this cursed land.

They shall take all to buy them bread,
 take all I have to give;
I, if I perish, perish; they to-day shall
 eat and live;
I, if I perish, perish, that's the goal I
 half conceive:

A ROYAL PRINCESS

Once to stand up face to face with heart-
pulse loud and hot—

It may be in this latter day I stand thus
in my lot—

And say: "I love you, love you," to
those who know me not;

Once to speak before the world, rend
bare my heart and show

The lesson I have learned, which is death,
is life, to know.

I, if I perish, perish. In the name of
God I go.

Death's Chill Between



Chide not: let me breathe a little,
For I shall not mourn him long;
Though the life-cord was so brittle,
The love-cord was very strong.
I would wake a little space
Till I find a sleeping-place.

You can go,—I shall not weep;
You can go unto your rest.
My heart-ache is all too deep,
And too sore my throbbing breast.
Can sobs be, or angry tears,
Where are neither hopes nor fears?

Though with you I am alone
And must be so everywhere,
I will make no useless moan,—
None shall say, “She could not bear”:
While life lasts I will be strong,—
But I shall not struggle long.

DEATH'S CHILL BETWEEN

Listen, listen!—Everywhere
A low voice is calling me,
And a step is on the stair,
And one comes you do not see.
Listen, listen!—Evermore
A dim hand knocks at the door.

Hear me! He is come again,—
My own dearest is come back.
Bring him in from the cold rain;
Bring wine, and let nothing lack.
Thou and I will rest together,
Love, until the sunny weather.

I will shelter thee from harm,—
Hide thee from all heaviness.
Come to me, and keep thee warm
By my side in quietness.
I will lull thee to thy sleep
With sweet songs:—we will not weep.

Who hath talked of weeping?—Yet
There is something at my heart
Gnawing, I would fain forget,
And an aching and a smart.
Ah! my mother, 'tis in vain,
For he is *not* come again.

Dream Land



Where sunless rivers weep
Their waves into the deep,
She sleeps a charmed sleep;
Awake her not.

Led by a single star,
She came from very far,
To seek where shadows are
Her pleasant lot.

She left the rosy morn,
She left the fields of corn,
For twilight cold and lorn,
And water springs.
Thro' sleep, as thro' a veil,
She sees the sky look pale,
And hears the nightingale
That sadly sings.

Rest, rest, a perfect rest
Shed over brow and breast;
Her face is toward the west,
The purple land.

DREAM LAND

She cannot see the grain
Ripening on hill and plain;
She cannot feel the rain
 Upon her hand.

Rest, rest, for evermore
Upon a mossy shore,
Rest, rest, that shall endure,
 Till time shall cease;—
Sleep that no pain shall wake,
Night that no morn shall break,
Till joy shall overtake
 Her perfect peace.

Maude Clare



The fields were white with lily-buds,
White gleamed the liliated beck;
Each mated pigeon plumed the pomp
Of his metallic neck.

She follow'd his bride into the church
With a lofty step and mien:
His bride was like a village maid,
Maude Clare was like a queen.

The minstrels made loud marriage din,
Each guest sat in his place,
To eat and drink, and wish good luck,
To do the wedding grace;

To eat and drink, and wish good luck,
To sing, and laugh, and jest:
One only neither ate nor drank,
Nor clapp'd her hands, nor bless'd.

"Son Thomas," his lady mother said,
With smiles, almost with tears,
"May Nell and you but live as true
As we have done for years;

MAUDE CLARE

"Your father thirty years ago
Had just your tale to tell;
But he was not so pale as you,
Nor I so pale as Nell."

My lord was pale with inward strife,
And Nell was pale with pride;
My lord gazed long on pale Maude Clare
Or ever he kiss'd the bride.

"Lo, I have brought my gift, my lord,
Have brought my gift," she said—
"To bless the hearth, to bless the board,
To bless the marriage-bed.

"Here's my half of the golden chain
You wore about your neck,
That day we waded ankle-deep
For lilies in the beck:

"Here's my half of the faded leaves
We pluck'd from budding bough,
With feet amongst the lily leaves,—
The lilies are budding now."

He strove to match her scorn with scorn,
He falter'd in his place:
"Lady," he said,—*"Maude Clare,"* he
said,
"*Maude Clare,*"—and hid his face.

MAUDE CLARE

She turned to Nell: "My Lady Nell,
I have a gift for you;
Though, were it fruit, the bloom were
gone,
Or, were it flowers, the dew.

"Take my share of a fickle heart,
Mine of a paltry love:
Take it or leave it as you will,
I wash my hands thereof."

"And what you leave," said Nell, "I'll
take,
And what you spurn I'll wear;
For he's my lord for better and worse.
And him I love, Maude Clare.

"Yea though you're taller by the head,
More wise, and much more fair,
I'll love him till he loves me best—
Me best of all, Maude Clare."

A Birthday



My heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a watered shoot;
My heart is like an apple-tree
Whose boughs are bent with thickset
fruit;
My heart is like a rainbow shell
That paddles in a halcyon sea;
My heart is gladder than all these
Because my love is come to me.

Raise me a dais of silk and down;
Hang it with vair and purple dyes;
Carve it in doves, and pomegranates,
And peacocks with a hundred eyes;
Work it in gold and silver grapes,
In leaves, and silver fleur-de-lys;
Because the birthday of my life
Is come, my love is come to me.

An Apple Gathering



I plucked pink blossoms from mine apple-
tree
And wore them all that evening in my
hair:
Then in due season when I went to see
I found no apples there.

With dangling basket all along the grass
As I had come I went the self-same
track:
My neighbours mocked me while they saw
me pass
So empty-handed back.

Lilian and Liliás smiled in trudging by,
Their heaped-up basket teased me like
a jeer;
Sweet-voiced they sang beneath the sunset
sky,
Their mother's home was near.

AN APPLE GATHERING

Plump Gertrude passed me with her basket
full,
A stronger hand than hers helped it
along;
A voice talked with her through the sha-
dows cool
More sweet to me than song.

Ah Willie, Willie, was my love less worth
Than apples with their green leaves
piled above?
I counted rosiest apples on the earth
Of far less worth than love.

So once it was with me you stooped to talk
Laughing and listening in this very lane;
To think that by this way we used to walk
We shall not walk again!

I let my neighbours pass me, ones and
twos
And groups; the latest said the night
grew chill,
And hastened: but I loitered, while the
dews
Fell fast I loitered still.

Twilight Calm



Oh pleasant eventide!
Clouds on the western side
Grow gray and grayer hiding the warm
sun:
The bees and birds, their happy labours
done,
Seek their close nests and bide.

Screened in the leafy wood
The stock-doves sit and brood:
The very squirrel leaps from bough to
bough
But lazily; pauses; and settles now
Where once he stored his food.

One by one the flowers close,
Lily and dewy rose
Shutting their tender petals from the
moon:
The grasshoppers are still; but not so
soon
Are still the noisy crows.

TWILIGHT CALM

The dormouse squats and eats
Choice little dainty bits
Beneath the spreading roots of a broad
lime;
Nibbling his fill he stops from time to time
And listens where he sits.

From far the lowings come
Of cattle driven home:
From farther still the wind brings fitfully
The vast continual murmur of the sea,
Now loud, now almost dumb.

The gnats whirl in the air,
The evening gnats; and there
The owl opes broad his eyes and wings
to sail
For prey; the bat wakes; and the shell-
less snail
Comes forth clammy and bare.

Hark! that's the nightingale,
Telling the self-same tale
Her song told when this ancient earth was
young:
So echoes answered when her song was
sung
In the first wooded vale.

TWILIGHT CALM

We call it love and pain,
The passion of her strain;
And yet we little understand or know.
Why should it not be rather joy that so
Throbs in each throbbing vein?

In separate herds the deer
Lie; here the bucks, and here
The does, and by its mother sleeps the
fawn:
Through all the hours of night until the
dawn
They sleep, forgetting fear.

The hare sleeps where it lies,
With wary half-closed eyes;
The cock has ceased to crow, the hen to
cluck:
Only the fox is out, some heedless duck
Or chicken to surprise.

Remote, each single star
Comes out, till there they are
All shining brightly. How the dews fall
damp!
While close at hand the glow-worm lights
her lamp,
Or twinkles from afar.

TWILIGHT CALM

But evening now is done
As much as if the sun
Day-giving had arisen in the East:
For night has come; and the great calm
has ceased,
The quiet sands have run.

Spring



Frost-locked all the winter,
Seeds, and roots, and stones of fruits,
What shall make their sap ascend
That they may put forth shoots?
Tips of tender green,
Leaf, or blade, or sheath;
Telling of the hidden life
That breaks forth underneath,
Life nursed in its grave by Death.

Blows the thaw-wind pleasantly,
Drips the soaking rain,
By fits looks down the waking sun:
Young grass springs on the plain;
Young leaves clothe early hedgerow trees;
Seeds, and roots, and stones of fruits,
Swoln with sap put forth their shoots;
Curled-headed ferns sprout in the lane;
Birds sing and pair again.

There is no time like Spring,
When life's alive in everything,

SPRING

Before new nestlings sing,
Before cleft swallows speed their journey
 back
Along the trackless track—
God guides their wing,
He spreads their table that they nothing
 lack,—
Before the daisy grows a common flower,
Before the sun has power
To scorch the world up in his noontide
 hour.

There is no time like Spring,
Like Spring that passes by;
There is no life like Spring-life born to
 die,—
Piercing the sod,
Clothing the uncouth clod,
Hatched in the nest,
Fledged on the windy bough,
Strong on the wing:
There is no time like Spring that passes
 by,
Now newly born, and now
Hastening to die.

Love from
the North



I had a love in soft south land,
Beloved through April far in May;
He waited on my lightest breath,
And never dared to say me nay.

He saddened if my cheer was sad,
But gay he grew if I was gay;
We never differed on a hair,
My yes his yes, my nay his nay.

The wedding hour was come, the aisles
Were flushed with sun and flowers that
day;
I pacing balanced in my thoughts:
"It's quite too late to think of nay".—

My bridegroom answered in his turn,
Myself had almost answered "yea":
When through the flashing nave I heard
A struggle and resounding "nay".

LOVE FROM THE NORTH

Bridemaids and bridegroom shrank in
fear,

But I stood high who stood at bay:

“And if I answer yea, fair Sir,

What man art thou to bar with nay?”

He was a strong man from the north,

Light-locked, with eyes of dangerous
gray:

“Put yea by for another time

In which I will not say thee nay.”

He took me in his strong white arms,

He bore me on his horse away

O'er crag, morass, and hairbreadth pass,

But never asked me yea or nay.

He made me fast with book and bell,

With links of love he makes me stay;

Till now I've neither heart nor power

Nor will nor wish to say him nay.

The Hour and the Ghost



Bride

O love, love, hold me fast,
He draws me away from thee;
I cannot stem the blast,
Nor the cold strong sea:
Far away a light shines
Beyond the hills and pines;
It is lit for me.

Bridegroom

I have thee close, my dear,
No terror can come near;
Only far off the northern light shines
clear.

Ghost

Come with me, fair and false,
To our home, come home.
It is my voice that calls:

THE HOUR AND THE GHOST

Once thou wast not afraid
When I wooed, and said,
"Come, our nest is newly made"—
Now cross the tossing foam.

Bride

Hold me one moment longer,
He taunts me with the past,
His clutch is waxing stronger,
Hold me fast, hold me fast.
He draws me from thy heart,
And I cannot withhold:
He bids my spirit depart
With him into the cold:—
Oh bitter vows of old!

Bridegroom

Lean on me, hide thine eyes:
Only ourselves, earth and skies,
Are present here: be wise.

Ghost

Lean on me, come away,
I will guide and steady:
Come, for I will not stay:
Come, for house and bed are ready.
Ah, sure bed and house,
For better and worse, for life and death;

THE HOUR AND THE GHOST

Goal won with shortened breath:
Come, crown our vows.

Bride

One moment, one more word,
While my heart beats still,
While my breath is stirred
By my fainting will.
O friend, forsake me not,
Forget not as I forgot:
But keep thy heart for me,
Keep thy faith true and bright;
Through the lone cold winter night
Perhaps I may come to thee.

Bridegroom

Nay peace, my darling, peace:
Let these dreams and terrors cease:
Who spoke of death or change or aught
but ease?

Ghost

O fair frail sin,
O poor harvest gathered in!
Thou shalt visit him again
To watch his heart grow cold;
To know the gnawing pain
I knew of old;

THE HOUR AND THE GHOST

To see one much more fair
Fill up the vacant chair,
Fill his heart, his children bear:—
While thou and I together
In the outcast weather
Toss and howl and spin.

Cousin Kate



I was a cottage-maiden
Hardened by sun and air,
Contented with my cottage-mates,
Not mindful I was fair.
Why did a great lord find me out
And praise my flaxen hair?
Why did a great lord find me out
To fill my heart with care?

He lured me to his palace-home—
Woe's me for joy thereof—
To lead a shameless shameful life,
His plaything and his love.
He wore me like a golden knot,
He changed me like a glove;
So now I moan an unclean thing
Who might have been a dove.

O Lady Kate, my cousin Kate,
You grew more fair than I:
He saw you at your father's gate,
Chose you, and cast me by.
He watched your steps along the lane.
Your work among the rye;

COUSIN KATE

He lifted you from mean estate
To sit with him on high.

Because you were so good and pure
He bound you with his ring:
The neighbours call you good and pure,
Call me an outcast thing.
Even so I sit and howl in dust,
You sit in gold and sing:
Now which of us has tenderer heart?
You had the stronger wing.

O cousin Kate, my love was true,
Your love was writ in sand:
If he had fooled not me but you,
If you stood where I stand,
He'd not won me with his love
Nor bought me with his land;
I would have spit into his face
And not have taken his hand.

Yet I've a gift you have not got
And seem not like to get:
For all your clothes and wedding-ring
I've little doubt you fret.
My fair-haired son, my shame, my pride.
Cling closer, closer yet:
Your father would give lands for one
To wear his coronet.

Shut Out



The door was shut. I looked between
Its iron bars; and saw it lie,
My garden, mine, beneath the sky,
Pied with all flowers bedewed and green:

From bough to bough the song-birds
crossed,
From flower to flower the moths and
bees;
With all its nests and stately trees
It had been mine, and it was lost.

A shadowless spirit kept the gate,
Blank and unchanging like the grave.
I peering through, said: "Let me have
Some buds to cheer my outcast state".

He answered not. "Or give me, then,
But one small twig from shrub or tree;
And bid my home remember me
Until I come to it again."

SHUT OUT

The spirit was silent; but he took
Mortar and stone to build a wall;
He left no loophole great or small
Through which my straining eyes might
look:

So now I sit here quite alone
Blinded with tears; nor grieve for that,
For nought is left worth looking at
Since my delightful land is gone.

A violet bed is budding near,
Wherein a lark has made her nest;
And good they are, but not the best;
And dear they are, but not so dear.

Echo



Come to me in the silence of the night;
Come in the speaking silence of a
dream;
Come with soft rounded cheeks and eyes
as bright
As sunlight on a stream;
Come back in tears,
O memory, hope, love of finished years.

O dream how sweet, too sweet, too
bitter sweet,
Whose wakening should have been in
Paradise,
Where souls brimfull of love abide and
meet;
Where thirsting longing eyes
Watch the slow door
That opening, letting in, lets out no
more.

ECHO

Yet come to me in dreams, that I may
live

My very life again though cold in
death:

Come back to me in dreams, that I may
give

Pulse for pulse, breath for breath:

Speak low, lean low,

As long ago, my love, how long ago!

The First Spring Day



I wonder if the sap is stirring yet,
If wintry birds are dreaming of a mate,
If frozen snowdrops feel as yet the sun
And crocus fires are kindling one by one:
Sing, robin, sing;
I still am sore in doubt concerning Spring.

I wonder if the Springtide of this year
Will bring another Spring both lost and
dear;
If heart and spirit will find out their
Spring,
Or if the world alone will bud and sing:
Sing, hope, to me;
Sweet notes, my hope, soft notes for
memory.

The sap will surely quicken soon or late,
The tardiest bird will twitter to a mate;
So Spring must dawn again with warmth
and bloom,
Or in this world or in the world to come:
Sing, voice of Spring,
Till I too blossom and rejoice and sing.

Rest



O Earth, lie heavily upon her eyes;
Seal her sweet eyes weary of watching,
Earth;
Lie close around her; leave no room
for mirth
With its harsh laughter, nor for sound
of sighs.
She hath no questions, she hath no re-
plies,
Hushed in and curtained with a blessed
dearth
Of all that irked her from the hour of
birth;
With stillness that is almost Paradise.
Darkness more clear than noonday holdeth
her,
Silence more musical than any song;
Even her very heart has ceased to stir:
Until the morning of Eternity
Her rest shall not begin nor end, but be;
And when she wakes she will not think
it long.

Remember



Remember me when I am gone away,
Gone far away into the silent land;
When you can no more hold me by the
hand,
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more day by day
You tell me of our future that you
planned:
Only remember me; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
For if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
Than that you should remember and be
sad.

After Death



The curtains were half drawn, the floor
was swept

And strewn with rushes, rosemary and
may

Lay thick upon the bed on which I lay,
Where through the lattice ivy-shadows
crept.

He leaned above me, thinking that I slept
And could not hear him; but I heard
him say,

“Poor child, poor child”: and as he
turned away

Came a deep silence, and I knew he wept.
He did not touch the shroud, or raise the
fold

That hid my face, or take my hand in
his,

Or ruffle the smooth pillows for my head :
He did not love me living; but once dead

He pitied me; and very sweet it is
To know he still is warm though I am cold.

Sound Sleep



Some are laughing, some are weeping;
She is sleeping, only sleeping.
Round her rest wild flowers are creeping;
There the wind is heaping, heaping
Sweetest sweets of Summer's keeping,
By the corn-fields ripe for reaping.

There are lilies, and there blushes
The deep rose, and there the thrushes
Sing till latest sunlight flushes
In the west; a fresh wind brushes
Through the leaves while evening hushes.

There by day the lark is singing
And the grass and weeds are springing;
There by night the bat is winging;
There for ever winds are bringing
Far-off chimes of church-bells ringing.

Night and morning, noon and even,
Their sound fills her dreams with Heaven:

SOUND SLEEP

The long strife at length is striven:
Till her grave-bands shall be riven
Such is the good portion given
To her soul at rest and shriven.

Sister Maude



Who told my mother of my shame,
Who told my father of my dear?
Oh who but Maude, my sister Maude,
Who lurked to spy and peer.

Cold he lies, as cold as stone,
With his clotted curls about his face:
The comeliest corpse in all the world
And worthy of a queen's embrace.

You might have spared his soul, sister,
Have spared my soul, your own soul too:
Though I had not been born at all,
He'd never have looked at you.

My father may sleep in Paradise,
My mother at Heaven-gate:
But sister Maude shall get no sleep
Either early or late.

My father may wear a golden gown,
My mother a crown may win;

SISTER MAUDE

If my dear and I knocked at Heaven-gate
Perhaps they'd let us in:
But sister Maude, oh sister Maude,
Bide *you* with death and sin.

A Summer Wish



Live all thy sweet life thro',
Sweet Rose, dew-sprent,
Drop down thine evening dew
To gather it anew
When day is bright:
I fancy thou wast meant
Chiefly to give delight.

Sing in the silent sky,
Glad soaring bird;
Sing out thy notes on high
To sunbeam straying by
Or passing cloud;
Heedless if thou art heard
Sing thy full song aloud.

Oh that it were with me
As with the flower;
Blooming on its own tree
For butterfly and bee
Its summer morns:
That I might bloom mine hour
A rose in spite of thorns.

A SUMMER WISH

Oh that my work were done
As birds' that soar
Rejoicing in the sun:
That when my time is run
And daylight too,
I so might rest once more
Cool with refreshing dew.

Noble Sisters



“ Now did you mark a falcon,
Sister dear, sister dear,
Flying toward my window
In the morning cool and clear?
With jingling bells about her neck,
But what beneath her wing?
It may have been a ribbon,
Or it may have been a ring.”—
“ I marked a falcon swooping
At the break of day:
And for your love, my sister dove,
I frayed the thief away.”—

“ Or did you spy a ruddy hound,
Sister fair and tall,
Went snuffing round my garden bound,
Or crouched by my bower wall?
With a silken leash about his neck;
But in his mouth may be
A chain of gold and silver links,
Or a letter writ to me.”—

NOBLE SISTERS

“I heard a hound, highborn sister,
Stood baying at the moon:
I rose and drove him from your wall
Lest you should wake too soon.”—

“Or did you meet a pretty page
Sat swinging on the gate;
Sat whistling whistling like a bird,
Or may be slept too late:
With eaglets broidered on his cap,
And eaglets on his glove?
If you had turned his pockets out,
You had found some pledge of love.”—

“I met him at this daybreak,
Scarce the east was red:
Lest the creaking gate should anger
you,
I packed him home to bed.”—

“Oh patience, sister. Did you see
A young man tall and strong,
Swift-footed to uphold the right
And to uproot the wrong,
Come home across the desolate sea
To woo me for his wife?
And in his heart my heart is locked,
And in his life my life.”—

“I met a nameless man, sister,
Hard by your chamber door:

NOBLE SISTERS

I said: 'Her husband loves her much,
And yet she loves him more'.—"—

"Fie, sister, fie, a wicked lie,
A lie, a wicked lie,
I have none other love but him,
Nor will have till I die.
And you have turned him from our door,
And stabbed him with a lie:
I will go seek him thro' the world
In sorrow till I die."—
"Go seek in sorrow, sister,
And find in sorrow too:
If thus you shame our father's name
My curse go forth with you."

A Peal of Bells



Strike the bells wantonly,
Tinkle tinkle well;
Bring me wine, bring me flowers,
Ring the silver bell.
All my lamps burn scented oil,
Hung on laden orange-trees,
Whose shadowed foliage is the foil
To golden lamps and oranges.
Heap my golden plates with fruit,
Golden fruit, fresh-plucked and ripe;
Strike the bells and breathe the pipe;
Shut out showers from summer hours—
Silence that complaining lute—
Shut out thinking, shut out pain,
From hours that cannot come again.

Strike the bells solemnly,
Ding dong deep:
My friend is passing to his bed,
Fast asleep;
There's plaited linen round his head,
While foremost go his feet—

A PEAL OF BELLS

His feet that cannot carry him.
My feast's a show, my lights are dim;
 Be still, your music is not sweet,—
There is no music more for him:
 His lights are out, his feast is done:
His bowl that sparkled to the brim
Is drained, is broken, cannot hold;
My blood is chill; his blood is cold;
 His death is full, and mine begun.

In the Round
Tower at Jhansi,
8th June, 1857



A hundred, a thousand to one; even so;
Not a hope in the world remained:
The swarming howling wretches below
Gained and gained and gained.

Skene looked at his pale young wife:—
“Is the time come?”—“The time is
come!”

Young, strong, and so full of life:
The agony struck them dumb.

Close his arm about her now,
Close her cheek to his,
Close the pistol to her brow—
God forgive them this!

“Will it hurt much?”—“No, mine own:
I wish I could bear the pang for both.”
“I wish I could bear the pang alone:
Courage, dear, I am not loth.”

IN THE ROUND TOWER

Kiss and kiss: "It is not pain

Thus to kiss and die.

One kiss more."—"And yet one again."—

"Good-bye."—"Good-bye."

The Lambs of Grasmere, 1860



The upland flocks grew starved and
thinned:

 Their shepherds scarce could feed the
 lambs

Whose milkless mothers butted them,

 Or who were orphaned of their dams.

The lambs athirst for mother's milk

 Filled all the place with piteous sounds:

Their mothers' bones made white for miles

 The pastureless wet pasture grounds.

Day after day, night after night,

 From lamb to lamb the shepherds went

With teapots for the bleating mouths,

 Instead of nature's nourishment.

The little shivering gaping things

 Soon knew the step that brought them
 aid,

And fondled the protecting hand,

 And rubbed it with a woolly head.

THE LAMBS OF GRASMERE

Then, as the days waxed on to weeks,
It was a pretty sight to see
These lambs with frisky heads and tails
Skipping and leaping on the lea,
Bleating in tender trustful tones,
Resting on rocky crag or mound,
And following the beloved feet
That once had sought for them and
found.

These very shepherds of their flocks,
These loving lambs so meek to please,
Are worthy of recording words
And honour in their due degrees:
So I might live a hundred years,
And roam from strand to foreign strand,
Yet not forget this flooded spring
And scarce-saved lambs of Westmore-
land.

Dead before Death



Ah! changed and cold, how changed and
very cold,

With stiffened smiling lips and cold calm
eyes:

Changed, yet the same; much knowing,
little wise;

This was the promise of the days of old!
Grown hard and stubborn in the ancient
mould,

Grown rigid in the sham of life-long
lies:

We hoped for better things as years
would rise,

But it is over as a tale once told.

All fallen the blossom that no fruitage
bore,

All lost the present and the future time,
All lost, all lost, the lapse that went be-
fore:

So lost till death shut-to the opened door,

So lost from chime to everlasting chime,
So cold and lost for ever evermore.

Another Spring



If I might see another Spring

I'd not plant summer flowers and wait:

I'd have my crocuses at once,

My leafless pink mezereons,

My chill-veined snowdrops, choicer yet

My white or azure violet,

Leaf-nested primrose; anything

To blow at once, not late.

If I might see another Spring

I'd listen to the daylight birds

That build their nests and pair and sing,

Nor wait for mateless nightingale;

I'd listen to the lusty herds,

The ewes with lambs as white as snow,

I'd find out music in the hail

And all the winds that blow.

If I might see another Spring—

Oh stinging comment on my past

That all my past results in "if"—

If I might see another Spring

ANOTHER SPRING

I'd laugh to-day, to-day is brief;
I would not wait for anything:
I'd use to-day that cannot last,
Be glad to-day and sing.

At Home



When I was dead, my spirit turned
To seek the much frequented house:
I passed the door, and saw my friends
Feasting beneath green orange boughs;
From hand to hand they pushed the wine,
They sucked the pulp of plum and peach;
They sang, they jested, and they laughed,
For each was loved of each.

I listened to their honest chat.
Said one: "To-morrow we shall be
Plod plod along the featureless sands
And coasting miles and miles of sea."
Said one: "Before the turn of tide
We will achieve the eyrie-seat."
Said one: "To-morrow shall be like
To-day, but much more sweet."

"To-morrow," said they, strong with
hope,
And dwelt upon the pleasant way:
"To-morrow," cried they one and all,
While no one spoke of yesterday.

AT HOME

Their life stood full at blessed noon;
I, only I, had passed away:
"To-morrow and to-day," they cried;
I was of yesterday.

I shivered comfortless, but cast
No chill across the tablecloth;
I all-forgotten shivered, sad
To stay and yet to part how loth:
I passed from the familiar room,
I who from love had passed away,
Like the remembrance of a guest
That tarrieth but a day.

Wife to
Husband



Pardon the faults in me,
For the love of years ago:
Good-bye.
I must drift across the sea,
I must sink into the snow,
I must die.

You can bask in this sun,
You can drink wine, and eat:
Good-bye.
I must gird myself and run,
Though with unready feet:
I must die.

Blank sea to sail upon,
Cold bed to sleep in:
Good-bye.
While you clasp, I must be gone
For all your weeping:
I must die.

WIFE TO HUSBAND

A kiss for one friend,
And a word for two,—
Good-bye:—
A lock that you must send,
A kindness you must do:
I must die.

Not a word for you,
Not a lock or kiss,
Good-bye.
We, one, must part in two;
Verily death is this:
I must die.

Song



She sat and sang alway
By the green margin of a stream,
Watching the fishes leap and play
Beneath the glad sunbeam.

I sat and wept alway
Beneath the moon's most shadowy beam,
Watching the blossoms of the May
Weep leaves into the stream.

I wept for memory:
She sang for hope that is so fair:
My tears were swallowed by the sea:
Her songs died on the air.

Bitter for Sweet



Summer is gone with all its roses,
Its sun and perfumes and sweet flowers,
Its warm air and refreshing showers:
And even Autumn closes.

Yea, Autumn's chilly self is going,
And Winter comes which is yet colder;
Each day the hoar-frost waxes bolder
And the last buds cease blowing.

Mirage



The hope I dreamed of was a dream,
Was but a dream; and now I wake,
Exceeding comfortless, and worn, and old,
For a dream's sake.

I hang my harp upon a tree,
A weeping willow in a lake;
I hang my silenced harp there, wrung
and snapt
For a dream's sake.

Lie still, lie still, my breaking heart;
My silent heart, lie still and break:
Life, and the world, and mine own self,
are changed
For a dream's sake.

Song



Oh roses for the flush of youth,
And laurel for the perfect prime;
But pluck an ivy branch for me
Grown old before my time.

Oh violets for the grave of youth,
And bay for those dead in their prime;
Give me the withered leaves I chose
Before in the old time.

Song



When I am dead, my dearest,
Sing no sad songs for me;
Plant thou no roses at my head,
Nor shady cypress tree:
Be the green grass above me
With showers and dewdrops wet;
And if thou wilt, remember,
And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows,
I shall not feel the rain;
I shall not hear the nightingale
Sing on as if in pain:
And dreaming through the twilight
That doth not rise nor set,
Haply I may remember,
And haply may forget.

An End



Love, strong as Death, is dead.
Come, let us make his bed
Among the dying flowers:
A green turf at his head;
And a stone at his feet,
Whereon we may sit
In the quiet evening hours.

He was born in the Spring,
And died before the harvesting:
On the last warm summer day
He left us; he would not stay
For Autumn twilight cold and gray.
Sit we by his grave, and sing
He is gone away.

To few chords and sad and low
Sing we so:
Be our eyes fixed on the grass
Shadow-veiled as the years pass,
While we think of all that was
In the long ago.

May



I cannot tell you how it was;
But this I know: it came to pass
Upon a bright and breezy day
When May was young; ah pleasant May!
As yet the poppies were not born
Between the blades of tender corn;
The last eggs had not hatched as yet,
Nor any bird foregone its mate.

I cannot tell you what it was;
But this I know: it did but pass.
It passed away with sunny May,
With all sweet things it passed away,
And left me old, and cold, and gray.

Three Seasons



“A cup for hope!” she said,
In springtime ere the bloom was old:
The crimson wine was poor and cold
By her mouth’s richer red.

“A cup for love!” how low,
How soft the words; and all the while
Her blush was rippling with a smile
Like summer after snow.

“A cup for memory!”
Cold cup that one must drain alone:
While autumn winds are up and moan
Across the barren sea.

Hope, memory, love:
Hope for fair morn, and love for day,
And memory for the evening gray
And solitary dove.

Song



Two doves upon the self-same branch,
Two lilies on a single stem,
Two butterflies upon one flower:—
Oh happy they who look on them.

Who look upon them hand in hand
Flushed in the rosy summer light;
Who look upon them hand in hand
And never give a thought to night.

A Triad



Three sang of love together: one with
lips

Crimson, with cheeks and bosom in a
glow,

Flushed to the yellow hair and finger-tips;
And one there sang who soft and smooth
as snow

Bloomed like a tinted hyacinth at a
show;

And one was blue with famine after love,
Who like a harpstring snapped rang
harsh and low

The burden of what those were singing of.
One shamed herself in love; one temper-
ately

Grew gross in soulless love, a sluggish
wife;

One famished died for love. Thus two
of three

Took death for love and won him after
strife;

One droned in sweetness like a fattened
bee:

All on the threshold, yet all short of
life.

Winter Rain



Every valley drinks,
Every dell and hollow:
Where the kind rain sinks and sinks,
Green of Spring will follow.

Yet a lapse of weeks
Buds will burst their edges,
Strip their wool-coats, glue-coats, streaks,
In the woods and hedges;

Weave a bower of love
For birds to meet each other,
Weave a canopy above
Nest and egg and mother.

But for fattening rain
We should have no flowers,
Never a bud or leaf again
But for soaking showers;

Never a mated bird
In the rocking tree-tops,
Never indeed a flock or herd
To graze upon the lea-crops.

WINTER RAIN

Lambs so woolly white,
Sheep the sun-bright leas on,
They could have no grass to bite
But for rain in season.

We should find no moss
In the shadiest places,
Find no waving meadow grass
Pied with broad-eyed daisies:

But miles of barren sand,
With never a son or daughter;
Not a lily on the land,
Or lily on the water.

Dream-Love



Young Love lies sleeping
In May time of the year,
Among the lilies,
Lapped in the tender light :
White lambs come grazing,
White doves come building there,
And round about him
The May bushes are white.

Soft moss the pillow,
For oh! a softer cheek;
Broad leaves cast shadow
Upon the heavy eyes:
There winds and waters
Grow lulled, and scarcely speak;
There twilight lingers
The longest in the skies.

Young Love lies dreaming;
But who shall tell the dream?—
A perfect sunlight
On rustling forest tips;

DREAM-LOVE

Or perfect moonlight
 Upon a rippling stream;
Or perfect silence,
 Or song of cherished lips.

Burn odours round him
 To fill the drowsy air,
Weave silent dances
 Around him to and fro:
For oh! in waking
 The sights are not so fair,
And song and silence
 Are not like these below.

Young Love lies dreaming
 Till summer days are gone,
Dreaming and drowsing
 Away to perfect sleep:
He sees the beauty
 Sun hath not looked upon,
And tastes the fountain
 Unutterably deep.

Him perfect music
 Doth hush unto his rest,
And through the pauses
 The perfect silence calms:

DREAM-LOVE

Oh! poor the voices
Of earth from east to west,
And poor earth's stillness
Between her stately palms.

Young Love lies drowsing
Away to popped death;
Cool shadows deepen
Across the sleeping face:
So fails the summer
With warm delicious breath,
And what hath autumn
To give us in its place?

Draw close the curtains
Of branched evergreen;
Change cannot touch them
With fading fingers sere:
Here the first violets
Perhaps will bud unseen,
And a dove, may be,
Return to nestle here.

Light Love



“Oh! sad thy lot before I came,
But sadder when I go;
My presence but a flash of flame,
A transitory glow
Between two barren wastes like snow.
What wilt thou do when I am gone?
Where wilt thou rest, my dear?
For cold thy bed to rest upon,
And cold the falling year
Whose withered leaves are lost and sere.”

She hushed the baby at her breast:
She rocked it on her knee:
“And I will rest my lonely rest,
Warmed with the thought of thee,
Rest lulled to rest by memory.”
She hushed the baby with her kiss,
She hushed it with her breast:
“Is death so sadder much than this—
Sure death that builds a nest
For those who elsewhere cannot rest?”

LIGHT LOVE

“Oh sad thy note, my mateless dove,
With tender nestling cold:
But hast thou ne'er another love,
Left from the days of old,
To build thy nest of silk and gold,
To warm thy paleness to a blush
When I am far away—
To warm thy coldness to a flush
And turn thee back to May,
And turn thy twilight back to day?”

She did not answer him again,
But leaned her face aside,
Wrung with the pang of shame and pain
And sore with wounded pride:
He knew his very soul had lied.
She strained his baby in her arms,
His baby to her heart:
“Even let it go, the love that harms;
We twain will never part!
Mine own, his own, how dear thou art!”

“Now never tease me, tender-eyed,
Sigh-voiced,” he said in scorn:
“For nigh at hand, there blooms a bride,
My bride before the morn;
Ripe-blooming she, as thou forlorn.
Ripe-blooming she, my rose, my peach:
She wooes me day and night:

LIGHT LOVE

I watch her tremble in my reach:
She reddens, my delight;
She ripens, reddens, in my sight."

"And is she like a sunlit rose?
Am I like withered leaves?
Haste where thy spiced garden blows:
But in bare Autumn eves
Wilt thou have store of harvest-sheaves?
Thou leavest love, true love behind,
To seek a love as true;
Go, seek in haste: but wilt thou find?
Change new again for new,
Pluck up, enjoy, yea trample too.

"Alas! for her, poor faded rose,
Alas! for her like me,
Cast down and trampled in the snows!"
"Like thee? nay, not like thee:
She leans, but from a guarded tree.
Farewell! and dream as long ago,
Before we ever met:
Farewell! my swift-paced horse seems
slow."

She raised her eyes, not wet
But hard, to Heaven: "Does God forget?"

The Bourne



Underneath the growing grass,
Underneath the living flowers,
Deeper than the sound of showers:
There we shall not count the hours
By the shadows as they pass.

Youth and health will be but vain,
Courage reckoned of no worth:
There a very little girth
Can hold round what once the earth
Seemed too narrow to contain.

The Fairy Prince
Who Arrived
Too Late



Too late for love, too late for joy,
Too late, too late!
You loitered on the road too long,
You trifled at the gate:
The enchanted dove upon her branch
Died without a mate;
The enchanted princess in her tower
Slept, died—behind the grate;
Her heart was starving all this while
You made it wait.

Ten years ago, five years ago,
One year ago,
Even then you had arrived in time,
Though somewhat slow.
And life have been a cordial “Yes”,
Instead of dreary “No”.
The frozen fountain would have leaped,
The buds gone on to blow,
The warm south wind would have awaked
To melt the snow.

THE FAIRY PRINCE

Is she fair now as she lies?
Once she was fair;
Meet queen for any kingly king,
With gold-dust on her hair.
Now those are poppies in her locks,
White poppies she must wear;
Must wear a veil to shroud her face
And the want graven there:
Or is the hunger fed at length,
Cast off the care?

We never saw her with a smile
Or with a frown;
Her bed seemed never soft to her,
Though tossed of down;
She little heeded what she wore,
Kirtle, or wreath, or gown;
We think her white brows often ached
Beneath her crown,
Till silvery hairs showed in her locks
That used to be so brown.

We never heard her speak in haste;
Her tones were sweet,
And modulated just so much
As it was meet:
Her heart sat silent through the noise
And concourse of the street.
There was no hurry in her hands,
No hurry in her feet;

WHO ARRIVED TOO LATE

There was no bliss drew nigh to her,
That she might run to greet.

You should have wept her yesterday,
Wasting upon her bed:
But wherefore should you weep to-day
That she is dead?
Lo we who love weep not to-day,
But crown her royal head.
Let be these poppies that we strew,
Your roses are too red:
Let be these poppies, not for you
Cut down and spread.

A Bird's-eye View



“Croak, croak, croak,”
Thus the Raven spoke,
Perched on his crooked tree,
As black as black could be.
Shun him and fear him,
Lest the Bridegroom hear him;
Scout him and rout him
With his ominous eye about him.

Yet, “Croak, croak, croak,”
Still tolled from the oak,
From that fatal black bird,
Whether heard or unheard:
“O ship upon the high seas,
Freighted with lives and spices,
Sink, O ship,” croaked the Raven:
“Let the Bride mount to heaven.”

In a far foreign land
Upon the wave-edged sand,
Some friends gaze wistfully
Across the glittering sea.

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

“If we could clasp our sister,”
Three say: “now we have missed her!”
“If we could kiss our daughter!”
Two sigh across the water.

Oh, the ship sails fast
With silken flags at the mast,
And the home-wind blows soft;
But a Raven sits aloft,
Chuckling and choking,
Croaking, croaking, croaking:—
Let the Bridegroom keep watch keenly
For this choice Bride mild and queenly.

On a sloped sandy beach,
Which the springtide billows reach,
Stand a watchful throng
Who have hoped and waited long:
“Fie on this ship that tarries
With the priceless freight it carries.
The time seems long and longer:
O languid wind, wax stronger;”—

Whilst the Raven perched at ease
Still croaks and does not cease,
One monotonous note
Tolled from his iron throat:
“No father, no mother,
But I have a sable brother:

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

He sees where ocean flows to,
And he knows what he knows too."

A day and a night
They kept watch worn and white;
A night and a day
For the swift ship on its way:
For the Bride and her maidens—
Clear chimes the bridal cadence—
For the tall ship that never
Hove in sight for ever.

On either shore, some
Stand in grief loud or dumb
As the dreadful dread
Grows certain tho' unsaid.
For laughter there is weeping,
And waking instead of sleeping,
And a desperate sorrow
Morrow after morrow.

Oh who knows the truth?
How she perished in her youth,
And like a queen went down
Pale in her royal crown:
How she went up to glory
From the sea-foam chill and hoary,
An innocent queen and holy,
To a high throne from a lowly?

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

They went down, all the crew,
The silks and spices too,
The great ones and the small,
One and all, one and all.
Was it thro' stress of weather,
Quicksands, rocks, or all together?
Only the Raven knows this,
And he will not disclose this.—

After a day and a year
The bridal bell chimes clear;
After a year and a day
The Bridegroom is brave and gay.
Love is sound, faith is rotten;
The old Bride is forgotten:—
Two ominous Ravens only
Remember, black and lonely.

One Day



I will tell you when they met:
In the limpid days of spring;
Elder boughs were budding yet,
Oaken boughs looked wintry still,
But primrose and veined violet
In the mossful turf were set,
While meeting birds made haste to sing
And build with right good will.

I will tell you when they parted:
When plenteous autumn sheaves were
 brown,
Then they parted heavy-hearted;
The full rejoicing sun looked down
As grand as in the days before;
Only they had lost a crown;
Only to them those days of yore
Could come back nevermore.

When shall they meet? I cannot tell,
Indeed, when they shall meet again,
Except some day in Paradise:
For this they wait, one waits in pain.

ONE DAY

Beyond the sea of death love lies
For ever, yesterday, to-day;
Angels shall ask them, "Is it well?"
And they shall answer "Yea".

Devotional Poems

Old and
New Year
Ditties



I

New Year met me somewhat sad:
Old Year leaves me tired,
Stripped of favourite things I had,
Baulked of much desired:
Yet farther on my road to-day
God willing, farther on my way.
New Year coming on apace
What have you to give me?
Bring you scathe, or bring you grace,
Face me with an honest face;
You shall not deceive me:
Be it good or ill, be it what you will,
It needs shall help me on my road,
My rugged way to heaven, please God.

2

Watch with me, men, women, and children
dear,
You whom I love, for whom I hope and
fear,

OLD AND NEW YEAR DITTIES

Watch with me this last vigil of the year.
Some hug their business, some their pleasure-scheme;
Some seize the vacant hour to sleep or dream;
Heart locked in heart some kneel and watch apart.

Watch with me, blessèd spirits, who delight
All through the holy night to walk in white,
Or take your ease after the long-drawn fight.
I know not if they watch with me: I know
They count this eve of resurrection slow,
And cry "How long?" with urgent utterance strong.

Watch with me, Jesus, in my loneliness:
Though others say me nay, yet say Thou yes;
Though others pass me by, stop Thou to bless.
Yea, Thou dost stop with me this vigil night;
To-night of pain, to-morrow of delight:
I, Love, am Thine; Thou, Lord my God, art mine.

3

Passing away, saith the World, passing
away:

Chances, beauty, and youth sapped day
by day:

Thy life never continueth in one stay.

Is the eye waxen dim, is the dark hair
changing to gray

That hath won neither laurel nor bay?

I shall clothe myself in Spring and bud
in May:

Thou, root-stricken, shalt not rebuild thy
decay

On my bosom for aye.

Then I answered: Yea.

Passing away, saith my Soul, passing away:

With its burden of fear and hope, of labour
and play,

Hearken what the past doth witness and
say:

Rust in thy gold, a moth is in thine array,

A canker is in thy bud, thy leaf must
decay.

At midnight, at cockcrow, at morning,
one certain day

Lo, the Bridegroom shall come and shall
not delay;

Watch thou and pray.

Then I answered: Yea.

OLD AND NEW YEAR DITTIES

Passing away, saith my God, passing
away:

Winter passeth after the long delay:

New grapes on the vine, new figs on the
tender spray,

Turtle calleth turtle in Heaven's May.

Though I tarry wait for Me, trust Me,
watch and pray.

Arise, come away, night is past and lo
it is day,

My love, My sister, My spouse, thou shalt
hear Me say.

Then I answered: Yea.

The Three Enemies



THE FLESH

“Sweet, thou art pale.”

“More pale to see,
Christ hung upon the cruel tree
And bore His Father’s wrath for me.”

“Sweet, thou art sad.”

“Beneath a rod
More heavy, Christ for my sake trod
The winepress of the wrath of God.”

“Sweet, thou art weary.”

“Not so Christ:
Whose mighty love of me sufficed
For Strength, Salvation, Eucharist.”

“Sweet, thou art footsore.”

“If I bleed,
His feet have bled: yea in my need
His Heart once bled for mine indeed.”

THE THREE ENEMIES

THE WORLD

"Sweet, thou art young."

"So He was young
Who for my sake in silence hung
Upon the Cross with Passion wrung."

"Look, thou art fair."

"He was more fair
Than men, Who deigned for me to wear
A visage marred beyond compare."

"And thou hast riches."

"Daily bread:
All else is His; Who living, dead,
For me lacked where to lay His Head."

"And life is sweet."

"It was not so
To Him, Whose Cup did overflow
With mine unutterable woe."

THE DEVIL

"Thou drinkest deep."

"When Christ would sup
He drained the dregs from out my cup:
So how should I be lifted up?"

THE THREE ENEMIES

“Thou shalt win Glory.”

“In the skies,
Lord Jesus, cover up mine eyes
Lest they should look on vanities.”

“Thou shalt have Knowledge.”

“Helpless dust
In thee, O Lord, I put my trust:
Answer Thou for me, Wise and Just.”

“And Might.”—

“Get thee behind me. Lord,
Who hast redeemed and not abhorred
My soul, oh keep it by Thy Word.”

From House to Home



The first was like a dream through summer
heat,
The second like a tedious numbing
swoon,
While the half-frozen pulses lagged to beat
Beneath a winter moon.

“But,” says my friend, “what was this
thing and where?”
It was a pleasure-place within my soul;
An earthly paradise supremely fair
That lured me from the goal.

The first part was a tissue of hugged lies;
The second was its ruin fraught with
pain:
Why raise the fair delusion to the skies
But to be dashed again?

My castle stood of white transparent glass
Glittering and frail with many a fretted
spire.

FROM HOUSE TO HOME

But when the summer sunset came to
pass
It kindled into fire.

My pleasaunce was an undulating green,
Stately with trees whose shadows slept
below,
With glimpses of smooth garden-beds be-
tween
Like flame or sky or snow.

Swift squirrels on the pastures took their
ease,
With leaping lambs safe from the un-
feared knife;
All singing-birds rejoicing in those trees
Fulfilled their careless life.

Wood-pigeons cooed there, stock-doves
nestled there;
My trees were full of songs and flowers
and fruit,
Their branches spread a city to the air,
And mice lodged in their root.

My heath lay farther off, where lizards
lived
In strange metallic mail, just spied and
gone;

FROM HOUSE TO HOME

Like darted lightnings here and there perceived
But nowhere dwelt upon.

Frogs and fat toads were there to hop or plod
And propagate in peace, an uncouth crew,
Where velvet-headed rushes rustling nod
And spill the morning dew.

All caterpillars throve beneath my rule,
With snails and slugs in corners out of sight;
I never marred the curious sudden stool
That perfects in a night.

Safe in his excavated gallery
The burrowing mole groped on from year to year;
No harmless hedgehog curled because of me
His prickly back for fear.

Oft-times one like an angel walked with me,
With spirit-discerning eyes like flames of fire,
But deep as the unfathomed endless sea,
Fulfilling my desire:

FROM HOUSE TO HOME

And sometimes like a snowdrift he was
fair,

And sometimes like a sunset glorious red,
And sometimes he had wings to scale the
air

With aureole round his head.

We sang our songs together by the way,
Calls and recalls and echoes of delight;
So communed we together all the day,
And so in dreams by night.

I have no words to tell what way we
walked,

What unforgotten path now closed and
sealed:

I have no words to tell all things we talked,
All things that he revealed:

This only can I tell: that hour by hour
I waxed more feastful, lifted up and glad;
I felt no thorn-prick when I plucked a
flower,

Felt not my friend was sad.

"To-morrow," once I said to him with
smiles:

"To-night," he answered gravely; and
was dumb,

FROM HOUSE TO HOME

But pointed out the stones that numbered
miles
And miles and miles to come.

“Not so,” I said: “to-morrow shall be
sweet;
To-night is not so sweet as coming
days.”

Then first I saw that he had turned his
feet,
Had turned from me his face:

Running and flying miles and miles he
went,
But once looked back to beckon with
his hand,
And cry: “Come home, O love, from
banishment:
Come to the distant land.”

That night destroyed me like an avalanche;
One night turned all my summer back
to snow:
Next morning not a bird upon my branch,
Not a lamb woke below,—

No bird, no lamb, no living breathing
thing;
No squirrel scampered on my breezy
lawn,

FROM HOUSE TO HOME

No mouse lodged by his hoard: all joys
took wing
And fled before that dawn.

Azure and sun were starved from heaven
above,
No dew had fallen, but biting frost lay
hoar:
O love, I knew that I should meet my love,
Should find my love no more.

"My love no more," I muttered, stunned
with pain:
I shed no tear, I wrung no passionate
hand,
Till something whispered: "You shall
meet again,
Meet in a distant land."

Then with a cry like famine I arose,
I lit my candle, searched from room to
room,
Searched up and down; a war of winds
that froze
Swept through the blank of gloom.

I searched day after day, night after night;
Scant change there came to me of night
or day:

FROM HOUSE TO HOME

“No more,” I wailed, “no more:” and
trimmed my light,
And gnashed but did not pray,

Until my heart broke and my spirit broke:
Upon the frost-bound floor I stumbled,
fell,
And moaned: “It is enough: withhold
the stroke.
Farewell, O love, farewell.”

Then life swooned from me. And I heard
the song
Of spheres and spirits rejoicing over me:
One cried: “Our sister, she hath suffered
long.”—
One answered: “Make her see.”—

One cried: “Oh blessèd she who no more
pain,
Who no more disappointment shall re-
ceive.”—
One answered: “Not so: she must live
again;
Strengthen thou her to live.”

So while I lay entranced a curtain seemed
To shrivel with crackling from before
my face:

FROM HOUSE TO HOME

Across mine eyes a waxing radiance
 beamed
And showed a certain place.

I saw a vision of a woman, where
 Night and new morning strive for
 domination;
Incomparably pale, and almost fair,
And sad beyond expression.

Her eyes were like some fire-enshrining
 gem,
 Were stately like the stars, and yet were
 tender;
Her figure charmed me like a windy stem
 Quivering and drooped and slender.

I stood upon the outer barren ground,
 She stood on inner ground that budded
 flowers;
While circling in their never-slackening
 round
Danced by the mystic hours.

But every flower was lifted on a thorn,
 And every thorn shot upright from its
 sands
To gall her feet; hoarse laughter pealed
 in scorn
With cruel clapping hands.

FROM HOUSE TO HOME

She bled and wept, yet did not shrink;
her strength

Was strung up until daybreak of delight:
She measured measureless sorrow toward
its length,
And breadth, and depth, and height.

Then marked I how a chain sustained her
form,

A chain of living links not made nor
riven:

It stretched sheer up through lightning,
wind, and storm,
And anchored fast in heaven.

One cried: "How long? yet founded on
the Rock

She shall do battle, suffer, and attain."—

One answered: "Faith quakes in the
tempest shock:

Strengthen her soul again."

I saw a cup sent down and come to her
Brimfull of loathing and of bitterness:
She drank with livid lips that seemed to
stir

The depth, not make it less.

But as she drank I spied a hand distil
New wine and virgin honey; making it

FROM HOUSE TO HOME

First bitter-sweet, then sweet indeed, until
She tasted only sweet.

Her lips and cheeks waxed rosy-fresh and
young;
Drinking she sang "My soul shall
nothing want;"
And drank anew: while soft a song was
sung,
A mystical slow chant.

One cried: "The wounds are faithful of a
friend:
The wilderness shall blossom as a
rose."—
One answered: "Rend the veil, declare
the end,
Strengthen her ere she goes."

Then earth and heaven were rolled up
like a scroll;
Time and space, change and death, had
passed away;
Weight, number, measure, each had
reached its whole;
The day had come, that day.

Multitudes—multitudes—stood up in bliss,
Made equal to the angels, glorious, fair;

FROM HOUSE TO HOME

With harps, palms, wedding-garments,
 kiss of peace,
And crowned and haloed hair.

They sang a song, a new song in the
 height,
 Harping with harps to Him Who is
 Strong and True:
They drank new wine, their eyes saw with
 new light,
Lo, all things were made new.

Tier beyond tier they rose and rose and rose,
 So high that it was dreadful, flames with
 flames:
No man could number them, no tongue
 disclose
 Their secret sacred names.

As though one pulse stirred all, one rush
 of blood
 Fed all, one breath swept through them
 myriad-voiced,
They struck their harps, cast down their
 crowns, they stood
And worshipped and rejoiced.

Each face looked one way like a moon new-lit,
 Each face looked one way towards its
 Sun of Love;

FROM HOUSE TO HOME

Drank love and bathed in love and mirrored
it
And knew no end thereof.

Glory touched glory on each blessed head,
Hands locked dear hands never to sunder
more:
These were the new-begotten from the
dead
Whom the great birthday bore.

Heart answered heart, soul answered soul
at rest,
Double against each other, filled, suf-
ficed:
All loving, loved of all; but loving best
And best beloved of Christ.

I saw that one who lost her love in pain,
Who trod on thorns, who drank the
loathsome cup;
The lost in night, in day was found again;
The fallen was lifted up.

They stood together in the blessed noon,
They sang together through the length
of days;
Each loving face bent Sunwards like a
moon
New-lit with love and praise.

FROM HOUSE TO HOME

Therefore, O friend, I would not if I might
Rebuild my house of lies, wherein I
joyed
One time to dwell: my soul shall walk in
white,
Cast down but not destroyed.

Therefore in patience I possess my soul;
Yea, therefore as a flint I set my face,
To pluck down, to build up again the
whole—
But in a distant place.

These thorns are sharp, yet I can tread
on them;
This cup is loathsome, yet He makes it
sweet:
My face is steadfast toward Jerusalem,
My heart remembers it.

I lift the hanging hands, the feeble knees—
I, precious more than seven times molten
gold—
Until the day when from His storehouses
God shall bring new and old;

Beauty for ashes, oil of joy for grief,
Garment of praise for spirit of heaviness:
Although to-day I fade as doth a leaf,
I languish and grow less.

FROM HOUSE TO HOME

Although to-day He prunes my twigs with
pain,

Yet doth His blood nourish and warm
my root:

To-morrow I shall put forth buds again
And clothe myself with fruit.

Although to-day I walk in tedious ways,

To-day His staff is turned into a rod,

Yet will I wait for Him the appointed days
And stay upon my God.

Sleep at Sea



Sound the deep waters:—

Who shall sound that deep?—

Too short the plummet,

And the watchmen sleep.

Some dream of effort

Up a toilsome steep;

Some dream of pasture grounds

For harmless sheep.

White shapes flit to and fro

From mast to mast;

They feel the distant tempest

That nears them fast:

Great rocks are straight ahead,

Great shoals not past;

They shout to one another

Upon the blast.

Oh, soft the streams drop music

Between the hills,

And musical the birds' nests

Beside those rills:

SLEEP AT SEA

The nests are types of home
Love-hidden from ills,
The nests are types of spirits
Love-music fills.

So dream the sleepers,
Each man in his place;
The lightning shows the smile
Upon each face:
The ship is driving, driving,
It drives apace:
And sleepers smile, and spirits
Bewail their case.

The lightning glares and reddens
Across the skies;
It seems but sunset
To those sleeping eyes.
When did the sun go down
On such a wise?
From such a sunset
When shall day arise?

"Wake," call the spirits:
But to heedless ears:
They have forgotten sorrows
And hopes and fears;
They have forgotten perils
And smiles and tears;

SLEEP AT SEA

Their dream has held them long,
Long years and years.

“Wake,” call the spirits again:
But it would take
A louder summons
To bid them awake.
Some dream of pleasure
For another’s sake:
Some dream, forgetful
Of a lifelong ache.

One by one slowly,
Ah, how sad and slow!
Wailing and praying
The spirits rise and go:
Clear stainless spirits,
White as white as snow;
Pale spirits, wailing
For an overthrow.

One by one flitting,
Like a mournful bird
Whose song is tired at last
For no mate heard.
The loving voice is silent,
The useless word;
One by one flitting
Sick with hope deferred.

SLEEP AT SEA

Driving and driving,
The ship drives amain:
While swift from mast to mast
Shapes flit again,
Flit silent as the silence
Where men lie slain;
Their shadow cast upon the sails
Is like a stain.

No voice to call the sleepers,
No hand to raise:
They sleep to death in dreaming
Of length of days.
Vanity of vanities,
The Preacher says:
Vanity is the end
Of all their ways.

“Consider the
Lilies of
the Field”



Flowers preach to us if we will hear:—
The rose saith in the dewy morn:
I am most fair;
Yet all my loveliness is born
Upon a thorn.
The poppy saith amid the corn:
Let but my scarlet head appear
And I am held in scorn;
Yet juice of subtle virtue lies
Within my cup of curious dyes.
The lilies say: Behold how we
Preach without words of purity.
The violets whisper from the shade
Which their own leaves have made:
Men scent our fragrance on the air,
Yet take no heed
Of humble lessons we would read.

But not alone the fairest flowers:
The merest grass
Along the roadside where we pass,

“CONSIDER THE LILIES”

Lichen and moss and sturdy weed,
Tell of His love Who sends the dew,
The rain and sunshine too,
To nourish one small seed.

A Testimony



I said of laughter: it is vain.
Of mirth I said: what profits it?
Therefore I found a book, and writ
Therein how ease and also pain,
How health and sickness, every one
Is vanity beneath the sun.

Man walks in a vain shadow; he
Disquieteth himself in vain.
The things that were shall be again;
The rivers do not fill the sea,
But turn back to their secret source;
The winds too turn upon their course.

Our treasures moth and rust corrupt,
Or thieves break through and steal, or
they
Make themselves wings and fly away.
One man made merry as he supped,
Nor guessed how when that night grew
dim
His soul would be required of him.

A TESTIMONY

We build our houses on the sand
Comely withoutside and within;
But when the winds and rains begin
To beat on them, they cannot stand:
They perish, quickly overthrown,
Loose from the very basement stone.

All things are vanity, I said:
Yea vanity of vanities.
The rich man dies; and the poor dies:
The worm feeds sweetly on the dead.
Whate'er thou lackest, keep this trust:
All in the end shall have but dust:

The one inheritance, which best
And worst alike shall find and share:
The wicked cease from troubling there,
And there the weary be at rest;
There all the wisdom of the wise
Is vanity of vanities.

Man flourishes as a green leaf,
And as a leaf doth pass away;
Or as a shade that cannot stay
And leaves no track, his course is brief:
Yet man doth hope and fear and plan
Till he is dead:—oh foolish man!

A TESTIMONY

Our eyes cannot be satisfied
With seeing, nor our ears be filled
With hearing: yet we plant and build
And buy and make our borders wide;
We gather wealth, we gather care,
But know not who shall be our heir.

Why should we hasten to arise
So early, and so late take rest?
Our labour is not good; our best
Hopes fade; our heart is stayed on lies.
Verily, we sow wind; and we
Shall reap the whirlwind, verily.

He who hath little shall not lack;
He who hath plenty shall decay:
Our fathers went; we pass away;
Our children follow on our track:
So generations fail, and so
They are renewed and come and go.

The earth is fattened with our dead;
She swallows more and doth not cease:
Therefore her wine and oil increase
And her sheaves are not numbered;
Therefore her plants are green, and all
Her pleasant trees lusty and tall.

A TESTIMONY

Therefore the maidens cease to sing,
And the young men are very sad;
Therefore the sowing is not glad,
And mournful is the harvesting.
Of high and low, of great and small,
Vanity is the lot of all.

A King dwelt in Jerusalem;
He was the wisest man on earth;
He had all riches from his birth,
And pleasures till he tired of them;
Then, having tested all things, he
Witnessed that all are vanity.

Advent



This Advent moon shines cold and clear,
These Advent nights are long;
Our lamps have burned year after year
And still their flame is strong.
"Watchman, what of the night?" we cry
Heart-sick with hope deferred:
"No speaking signs are in the sky,"
Is still the watchman's word.

The Porter watches at the gate,
The servants watch within;
The watch is long betimes and late,
The prize is slow to win.
"Watchman, what of the night?" but
still
His answer sounds the same:
"No daybreak tops the utmost hill,
Nor pale our lamps of flame."

One to another hear them speak
The patient virgins wise:
"Surely He is not far to seek"—
"All night we watch and rise."

ADVENT

"The days are evil looking back,
The coming days are dim;
Yet count we not His promise slack,
But watch and wait for Him."

One with another, soul with soul,
They kindle fire from fire:
"Friends watch us who have touched the
goal."
"They urge us, come up higher."
"With them shall rest our waysore feet,
With them is built our home,
With Christ."—"They sweet, but He most
sweet,
Sweeter than honeycomb."

There no more parting, no more pain,
The distant ones brought near,
The lost so long are found again,
Long lost but longer dear:
Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard,
Nor heart conceived that rest,
With them our good things long deferred,
With Jesus Christ our Best.

We weep because the night is long,
We laugh for day shall rise,
We sing a slow contented song
And knock at Paradise.

ADVENT

Weeping we hold Him fast Who wept
For us, we hold Him fast;
And will not let Him go except
He bless us first or last.

Weeping we hold Him fast to-night;
We will not let Him go
Till daybreak smite our wearied sight
And summer smite the snow:
Then figs shall bud, and dove with dove
Shall coo the livelong day;
Then He shall say, "Arise, My love,
My fair one, come away."

Christian and Jew: A Dialogue



“Oh happy happy land!
Angels like rushes stand
About the wells of light.”—

“Alas, I have not eyes for this fair
sight:
Hold fast my hand.”

“As in a soft wind, they
Bend all one blessed way,
Each bowed in his own glory, star
with star,”—

“I cannot see so far;
Here shadows are.”—

“White-winged the cherubim,
Yet whiter seraphim,
Glow white with intense fire of love.”—

“Mine eyes are dim:
I look in vain above,
And miss their hymn.”—

CHRISTIAN AND JEW

“Angels, Archangels cry
One to other ceaselessly
 (I hear them sing)
 One ‘Holy, Holy, Holy’ to their
 King.”—
“I do not hear them, I.”—

“At one side Paradise
 Is curtained from the rest,
Made green for wearied eyes;
 Much softer than the breast
Of mother-dove clad in a rainbow’s dyes.

“All precious souls are there
 Most safe, elect by grace,
 All tears are wiped for ever from their
 face:
Untired in prayer
 They wait and praise
 Hidden for a little space.

“Boughs of the Living Vine,
They spread in summer shine
 Green leaf with leaf:
Sap of the Royal Vine, it stirs like wine
 In all both less and chief.

“Sing to the Lord,
 All spirits of all flesh sing;

CHRISTIAN AND JEW

For He hath not abhorred
Our low estate nor scorned our offering:
Shout to our King.”—

“But Zion said:
My Lord forgetteth me.
Lo, she hath made her bed
In dust; forsaken weepeth she
Where alien rivers swell the sea.

“She laid her body as the ground,
Her tender body as the ground to those
Who passed; her harpstrings cannot sound
In a strange land; discrowned
She sits, and drunk with woes.”—

“O drunken not with wine,
Whose sins and sorrows have fulfilled
the sum,—
Be not afraid, arise, be no more dumb;
Arise, shine,
For thy light is come.”—

“Can these bones live?”—
“God knows:
The prophet saw such clothed with flesh
and skin;
A wind blew on them, and life entered
in;

CHRISTIAN AND JEW

They shook and rose.

Hasten the time, O Lord, blot out their
sin,

Let life begin."

**"The Love
of Christ
which passeth
Knowledge"**



I bore with thee long weary days and
nights,
Through many pangs of heart, through
many tears;
I bore with thee, thy hardness, coldness,
slights,
For three-and-thirty years.

Who else had dared for thee what I have
dared?
I plunged the depth most deep from
bliss above;
I not My flesh, I not My spirit spared:
Give thou Me love for love.

For thee I thirsted in the daily drouth,
For thee I trembled in the nightly
frost:
Much sweeter thou than honey to My
mouth:
Why wilt thou still be lost?

THE LOVE OF CHRIST

I bore thee on My shoulders and rejoiced:
Men only marked upon My shoulders
borne
The branding cross; and shouted hungry-
voiced,
Or wagged their heads in scorn.

Thee did nails grave upon My hands,
thy name
Did thorns for frontlets stamp between
Mine eyes:
I, Holy One, put on thy guilt and shame;
I, God, Priest, Sacrifice.

A thief upon My right hand and My left;
Six hours alone, athirst, in misery:
At length in death one smote My heart
and cleft
A hiding-place for thee.

Nailed to the racking cross, than bed of
down
More dear, whereon to stretch Myself
and sleep:
So did I win a kingdom,—share My
crown;
A harvest,—come and reap.

Sweet Death



The sweetest blossoms die.

And so it was that, going day by day
Unto the Church to praise and pray,
And crossing the green churchyard thought-
fully,

I saw how on the graves the flowers
Shed their fresh leaves in showers,
And how their perfume rose up to the
sky
Before it passed away.

The youngest blossoms die.

They die and fall and nourish the rich
earth
From which they lately had their birth;
Sweet life, but sweeter death that passeth
by
And is as though it had not been:—
All colours turn to green;
The bright hues vanish and the odours
fly,
The grass hath lasting worth.

SWEET DEATH

And youth and beauty die.

So be it, O my God, Thou God of
Truth:

Better than beauty and than youth
Are Saints and Angels, a glad company;
And Thou, O Lord, our Rest and Ease,
Art better far than these.

Why should we shrink from our full har-
vest? why

Prefer to glean with Ruth?

Symbols



I watched a rosebud very long
Brought on by dew and sun and shower,
Waiting to see the perfect flower:
Then, when I thought it should be strong,
It opened at the matin hour
And fell at evensong.

I watched a nest from day to day,
A green nest full of pleasant shade,
Wherein three speckled eggs were laid:
But when they should have hatched in
May,
The two old birds had grown afraid
Or tired, and flew away.

Then in my wrath I broke the bough
That I had tended so with care,
Hoping its scent should fill the air;
I crushed the eggs, not heeding how
Their ancient promise had been fair:
I would have vengeance now.

SYMBOLS

But the dead branch spoke from the sod,
And the eggs answered me again :
Because we failed dost thou complain?
Is thy wrath just? And what if God,
Who waiteth for thy fruits in vain.
Should also take the rod?

**"A Bruised
Reed shall He
not Break"**



I will accept thy will to do and be,
Thy hatred and intolerance of sin,
Thy will at least to love, that burns
within

And thirsteth after Me:

So will I render fruitful, blessing still,
The germs and small beginnings in
thy heart,
Because thy will cleaves to the better
part.—

Alas, I cannot will.

Dost not thou will, poor soul? Yet I re-
ceive

The inner unseen longings of the soul,
I guide them turning towards Me; I
control

And charm hearts till they grieve:

A BRUISED REED

If thou desire, it yet shall come to pass,
Though thou but wish indeed to choose
My love;
For I have power in earth and heaven
above.—
I cannot wish; alas!

What, neither choose nor wish to choose?
and yet
I still must strive to win thee and con-
strain:
For thee I hung upon the cross in pain,
How then can I forget?
If thou as yet dost neither love nor hate,
Nor choose nor wish,—resign thyself,
be still,
Till I infuse love, hatred, longing, will.
I do not deprecate.

The World



By day she woos me, soft, exceeding
fair:

But all night as the moon so changeth
she;

Loathsome and foul with hideous lep-
rosy

And subtle serpents gliding in her hair.

By day she woos me to the outer air,

Ripe fruits, sweet flowers, and full sa-
tiety:

But thro' the night a beast she grins
at me,

A very monster void of love and prayer.

By day she stands a lie: by night she
stands

In all the naked horror of the truth,

With pushing horns and clawed and
clutching hands.

Is this a friend indeed; that I should sell

My soul to her, give her my life and
youth,

Till my feet, cloven too, take hold on
hell?

The One Certainty



Vanity of vanities, the Preacher saith,
All things are vanity. The eye and ear
Cannot be filled with what they see and
hear.

Like early dew, or like the sudden breath
Of wind, or like the grass that withereth,
Is man, tossed to and fro by hope and
fear:

So little joy hath he, so little cheer,
Till all things end in the long dust of
death.

To-day is still the same as yesterday,
To-morrow also even as one of them;
And there is nothing new under the
sun:

Until the ancient race of Time be
run,
The old thorns shall grow out of the
old stem,
And morning shall be cold and twilight
gray.

A Better Resurrection



I have no wit, no words, no tears;
My heart within me like a stone
Is numbed too much for hopes or fears;
Look right, look left, I dwell alone;
I lift mine eyes, but dimmed with grief
No everlasting hills I see;
My life is in the falling leaf.
O Jesus, quicken me.

My life is like a faded leaf,
My harvest dwindled to a husk;
Truly my life is void and brief
And tedious in the barren dusk;
My life is like a frozen thing,
No bud nor greenness can I see:
Yet rise it shall—the sap of Spring;
O Jesus, rise in me.

My life is like a broken bowl,
A broken bowl that cannot hold
One drop of water for my soul
Or cordial in the searching cold;
Cast in the fire the perished thing,
Melt and remould it till it be
A royal cup for Him my King:
O Jesus, drink of me.

A Pause of Thought



I looked for that which is not, nor can
be,
And hope deferred made my heart sick
in truth:
But years must pass before a hope of
youth
Is resigned utterly.

I watched and waited with a steadfast
will:
And though the object seemed to flee
away
That I so longed for, ever day by day
I watched and waited still.

Sometimes I said: This thing shall be no
more;
My expectation wearies and shall cease;
I will resign it now and be at peace:
Yet never gave it o'er.

.1 PAUSE OF THOUGHT

Sometimes I said: It is an empty name
I long for; to a name why should I
give
The peace of all the days I have to
live?
Yet gave it all the same.

Alas, thou foolish one! alike unfit
For healthy joy and salutary pain:
Thou knowest the chase useless, and
again
Turnest to follow it.

Amen



It is over. What is over?

Nay, now much is over truly!—
Harvest days we toiled to sow for;
Now the sheaves are gathered newly,
Now the wheat is garnered duly.

It is finished. What is finished?

Much is finished known or unknown:
Lives are finished; time diminished;
Was the fallow field left unsown?
Will these buds be always unblown?

It suffices. What suffices?

All suffices reckoned rightly:
Spring shall bloom where now the ice is,
Roses make the bramble sightly,
And the quickening sun shine brightly,
And the latter wind blow lightly,
And my garden teem with spices.

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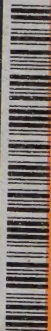
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